

# GRADING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

AXTELL

THE  
OUTCOME  
OF  
ORGANI-  
ZATION



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# GRADING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

## THE OUTCOME OF ORGANIZATION

By J. W. AXTELL

AUTHOR OF

The Organized Sunday School  
The Teaching Problem  
The Superintendent's Handbook  
The Teacher's Handbook

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## FOREWORD.

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A crisis is on in religious education. Forces are at work which point to material changes in its character within the limits of our time. That these forces may not all be well directed is immaterial. What really does signify is that there is an unrest, born of the realization that religious education as we find it largely fails to educate. This unrest is especially marked in the Sunday school field, and finds its expression in a general even if not clearly defined reaching after better things.

No sane investigator can doubt that there are better things for the Sunday school. These are naturally looked for, too, through the introduction of graded work in that institution. As a result numerous courses of study are being issued, many of which have much in them to commend. However, there is a dearth of comprehensive, practical suggestion as to the underlying principles of grading, and as to how the work may best be done. There is a mistaken impression, too, that grading is feasible only under unusual circumstances. This book is designed to help in the premises.

THE AUTHOR

*Nashville, Tenn., August, 1904.*



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# Grading the Sunday School.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

A number of ladies are serenely discussing some subject of mutual interest. They are having a most enjoyable time, and are all unconscious of impending danger. Without warning some one shouts, "A mouse!" and there is an instant transfer of feet to chairs and tables. Only a few in the company retain their places and calmly look around for the terrified invader.

The working corps of the average Sunday school is equally prompt to run to cover when some one says, "Let us grade!" The thing that is meant by grading may be called by any of its synonyms, and when so called it is contemplated with perfect equanimity. The somewhat indefinite terms relating to higher work do not disturb our somnolence; but it is when forward movement is so unequivocal as to be called "grading" that we beg, Macbeth-like, that it "take any shape but that."

Two  
Similar  
Alarms.

It is therefore natural that those who discuss Sunday school interests should hesitate to approach this phase of the development of our great work. This hesitation is increased by the realization that grading is just now in process of evolution, that its principles are only now being worked out, and that there

Why  
They  
Hesitate.

is comparatively little of practical demonstration of its results to which one can point. The writer has long been a student of grading, but has felt that the proportion of the untried to the tried concerning it was so great as to cast doubt upon the propriety of the preparation of a text-book on the subject. It is only after receiving repeated requests, extending through a term of years, that the work is undertaken.

The general view of the Sunday school and its mission held by even the majority of Sunday school workers is somewhat superficial. The representative school is holding a reasonable number of people together, is fairly orderly, is quite respectable, and furnishes a field in which those members of the church who feel that they ought to be "doing something" can do it without special effort or inconvenience. As far as it goes this seems to be all right; but there is little disposition to go farther. Those officially responsible for and most familiar with the work are satisfied. Even these too rarely go beneath the surface. Why should those who know less about it, and are less interested, do so? This growing self-complacency is the bane of the present-day Sunday school.

Did it ever occur to the reader that there is a prevalent lack of definite aim in the Sunday school? Of course there is a general idea that the institution is to "do good" in the community. But *what good?* Is any one specific good thing laid down January 1 which is to be accomplished, or known, or corrected, by the school, or by individuals in the school, before December 31? Is there anything more than a vague "hope" that substantial results may be realized?

A Very  
Superficial  
View.

Lack of  
Specific  
Aim.

Can the average worker in the average school place his finger on things learned in a given time because it was specifically planned that these particular things should be learned in that time? Have there been any confessions of Christ, any additions to the membership of the church, any missionary movements in the community, any of God's poor helped—all because the organization worked by chart and compass to these specific ends? Be honest, now—have not such meagre results as have been secured in the average school been almost wholly *incidental*? Is it not true that the one thing *known* to have been accomplished has been the keeping of a given number of restless people away from the possibility of doing something worse for an hour on Sunday?

Too  
Much  
of the  
Incidental.

Of course other good *is* accomplished—but how intangible it is! The intangible is often real, but perhaps oftener it is unreal. Those looking on the Sunday school from the outside are impressed by the apparent lack of reality in its achievements. This lack is the natural result of indefiniteness in its plans and slipshod methods in their execution.

Any one who reads these pages would promptly discharge a salesman, or bookkeeper, or laborer, or cook, or seamstress, or school teacher, who would for a *single week* show the aimlessness characterizing the majority of our Sunday school workers in the discharge of duties left in their hands through a long term of years. Plain words, of course. But who will dispute their truth?

Discharges  
for  
Cause.

As unpleasant as is the task, let us work out some more of the details of the picture. The conditions discussed are bringing the Sunday school face to face with a very grave danger. At a time when every

**How it  
Used  
to Be.**

other educational institution is doing better and more painstaking work, the Sunday school in general is becoming more and more lax in its organization, and less and less exacting in its requirements. Indeed the most of our schools practically have no "requirements." To illustrate, the oldtime Sunday school was perhaps less "popular," but it *did* require some things. It called for at least the memorizing of scripture and made the catechism a regular part of the curriculum, instead of having it used at will, as is the case with modern schools in general.

The contrast with other educational institutions is very significant. These are gaining in character and standing. Their work is more and more thorough, more and more definite, more and more full of meaning. The Sunday school is entirely out of line with the times in these particulars, and is consequently coming to signify less and less to those who measure institutions by the character of their work. The situation must be recognized and understood. The Sunday school is face to face with a crisis. It is in danger of losing its prestige and usefulness. What are we going to do about it?

**A Failure  
to  
Under-  
stand.**

The Sunday school is an evolution and is undergoing a process of evolution. Begun for one purpose, it has in the providence of God been diverted to another. In its present relation to the social structure its possibilities have not been understood. There is a general misapprehension as to its necessary scope if it is to be the religious educator of the youth of the Christian church. It is what it is largely because of this misapprehension. It has been believed that the voluntary character of its make-up precluded the possibility of its elevation to the position of a me-

thodical educational institution. Its constantly and rapidly shifting membership has been accepted as evidence that it was incapable of a more thorough and substantial class of work; instead of its fluctuating personnel being justly explained on the ground of its very lax requirements. To correct the attitude of Sunday school workers in general toward their loved institution it is only necessary to remove this misapprehension as to its legitimate scope and certain possibilities.

Right here is where grading comes in. It means educational saneness. It means the accomplishment of results. It means a much more substantial following. If it should mean a temporary elimination of a part of the present unassimilable clientele of the Sunday school, that is only an incident of all progress, religious or otherwise. It means the eradication of incorrect conceptions as to what constitutes real work for the Master. It means adaptation of methods of work to the developments of the Twentieth Century.

It also means discouragement, and the meeting of difficulties, and sometimes the apparent blocking of the way. All this must be expected. Our duty in the premises is to consider whether we be able with ten thousand men to meet the twenty thousand coming against us. Who can question the result, if we ask and work aright?

What is graded work in the Sunday school? When (1) pupils are arranged in classes and departments with reference to attainment as the principal consideration, qualified by time of life, ability to learn, etc.; when (2) teachers are chosen and located strictly with respect to their fitness to instruct in these vari-

Grading  
to the  
Rescue.

Grading  
Defined.

ous divisions; and when (3) the matter taught and the manner of teaching are arranged with the same considerations in view;—when all of these conditions are in force, the Sunday school is working under the graded system.

In treating this subject I am especially anxious to be lucid and simple, adapting the discussions and recommendations to the needs of the lay worker and to the representative Sunday school. I will therefore avoid the technical and the ultra pedagogic.

## CHAPTER II.

## THINGS AS WE FIND THEM

Primarily a Sunday school carries with it the idea of some approach to grades in classes and grades in teaching. A Sunday school cannot be organized on any other hypothesis than that people of different degrees of mental development are to be assembled for instruction, and that the instruction is to be to some extent adapted to these degrees. Every school is therefore in a sense a graded school. It is simply a question of how thoroughly the grading shall be done. Shall it be left as we generally find it—crude and unsatisfactory—or shall it be carried out into a classification approximating in completeness to that which is peculiar to every other institution of an educational character? In Sunday schools as we find them class work is begun at a common place. From that point right on there is wide variation in the thoroughness with which it is done; and a leading factor in this thoroughness is the matter and manner of grading.

Grading  
Already  
Begun.

Although all Sunday schools may be said to be after a manner graded, the grading is ordinarily confined to one side of the work. There is a kind of assorting of pupils into groups, with some reference to age and attainment—more particularly as to age; but the work usually goes no farther. This is accepted as the limit of grading. Such a thing as assorting teachers also, with a view to adapting the instructors to the instructed, is in most schools prac-

tically unknown. Among Sunday school managers of intelligence it is conceded that the closest grading of children compatible with local conditions is desirable; but to suggest even to these, except in occasional schools, that it is no less important to measure the capacity of people to teach, and to place restrictions on the grades which they shall teach, is to invite dissent of the most pronounced character.

The day is now past when it was necessary to demonstrate that education of any kind is more easily, more certainly and more satisfactorily acquired by regular and gradual steps in instruction than in any other way. The great school systems of the civilized world are all organized with this idea distinctly in view. The principle is recognized everywhere and under all conditions. The Sunday school alone is excepted. Is this exception necessary, or does it grow out of a misapprehension of the proprieties and possibilities in the case of the Sunday school?

Those who have given the subject of grading the most comprehensive study are convinced that this manifest difference should not exist at least in its present degree. The best workers feel that there is a lack in Sunday school methods and results which should in some way be supplied. There is some difference of opinion as to the way in which this lack is to be made good, and as to the degree of improvement which is practicable; but this not very serious difference is more because of the limited amount of demonstration in sight than because of anything else.

It is not out of place to say that the situation in which we find the Sunday school does much to impair its standing in the community. Its work is so

A Lack  
to be  
Supplied.

often devoid of system and so barren of outcome that it fails to command the respect to which it is really entitled. The children whose work in the day school is so methodical, and accompanied by so much of development, are apt to look with something akin to contempt upon class work in which but little of specific information is sought to be imparted, in which pupils of all degrees of attainment are placed side by side, and in which the instructor's personal character is his only recommendation. Besides, adults regard slightly the loose formation of classes and the work of ill-assorted instructors, and where so little is to be learned these adults wear lightly the harness of Sunday school membership.

Grading a Sunday school as it should be graded cannot be thoroughly accomplished until two long established prejudices are removed. One of these is that it will not do to place pupils by the grade of attainment, lest many be driven from the school; and the other is that a teacher and a class having once been started together should in rare instances if ever be separated. The first of these difficulties is the more troublesome of the two in a general way, but the second is the more deep-seated and the more likely to defeat progressive attempts. Neither will yield quickly or easily to treatment, and either will perhaps require years for its correction; but both are absolutely incompatible with the best Sunday school work, and both must in time give way to improved conditions.

The entire history of the Sunday school is a history of prejudices overcome and obstacles within itself removed. The Sunday school itself, originating as

Where the  
School is  
Compro-  
mised.

Two  
Venerable  
Prejudices.

**A Victory  
over  
Prejudice.**

it did outside of strict church lines, was long regarded with disfavor by the church. Indeed, one of the largest churches near the home of the writer carried an announcement for years on its front to the effect that it had no Sunday school, using this as a drawing card. This condition has gradually given way, until by its merits the Sunday school has come to be accepted and employed as the advance agent of permanent evangelical work the world over

**What  
Must  
Follow.**

In spite of the prejudices in the way, the graded system of instruction must come just as surely as the Sunday school has come, and, like the school, to stay. The school which is first to recognize this necessary condition in any community, and which will first conform its plans to the new requirements, will become the foremost school as well; and those schools which are slowest to accept the progressive idea will in a few years find themselves working to great disadvantage, and seriously handicapped for usefulness.

The two prejudices alluded to will be considered in another connection. The danger of meddling with either is greatly magnified, though, in the imagination of those good people who in all of their church work are unduly afraid of giving personal offence. Giving offence is always to be avoided, and usually may be where thoughtful care is taken to do everything impartially, judiciously, and for reasons which are clearly explained. However, the risk of displeasure must sometimes be incurred in the discharge of duty.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE FEASIBILITY OF HIGHER WORK.

There is already too much of guess-work and uncertainty connected with the Sunday school, and it would be most unfortunate if anything were introduced which would tend to aggravate these conditions. It is therefore important that we stop on the threshold of our subject and determine whether the comparatively thorough grading of the Sunday school can be successfully accomplished. We must not only know whether it is at all feasible, but also whether it can be done without unreasonable hazard and effort.

Let it be admitted that the public school has a great advantage over the Sunday school in this particular. In the enforcement of its purposes the former has back of it the law of the land, the determination of the parent that the child shall be educated, and the worldly incentive appealing to the child to come up higher. There is no law especially affecting religious education. Few parents care to use their authority to secure the attendance of their children at Sunday school, much less to affect the kind of work they do there. Most parents are utterly indifferent about the matter. Nor is there anything in it all to appeal to the ambition of the child. Besides there is a vast difference between something that is made a business for eight or nine months in the year, and something which commands an hour, almost incidentally, from forty to fifty-two times in the year.

No Place  
for  
Guess-  
work.

Public  
School  
Advan-  
tages.

The great differences in the influences affecting the two institutions must not be minimized in our calculations.

While careful about minimizing in one direction, let us be equally careful about maximizing in another. When we become men we put away many childish things, but we are prone to *not* put away our childish notions about giants in the way of things which we are not especially anxious to undertake. I say things we are not anxious to undertake—for the reason that giants have little or no place as expected impediments when our hearts are in the thing that lies ahead. In the one case we create hobgoblins with indefatigable industry, and clothe them with astonishing powers. In the other case Blunderbores vanish like magic before the heat of our enthusiasm.

**“Pros”  
and  
“Cons.”**

What we need, then, is a calm, dispassionate weighing of the “pros” and “cons.” Nor can I refrain from saying in this connection that if we are satisfied the thing in contemplation is for the glory of God and the welfare of his kingdom, we are bound, as loyal children of the King, to give the “pros” the greater consideration. The weighing of the “cons” should be more for the purpose of circumventing them than for allowing them to deter us from a purpose born of a desire to serve our Master in a better way. It should be remembered, for our encouragement, that much more difficult things—things seemingly altogether out of keeping with the times in which they were undertaken—have repeatedly been accomplished in the King’s name.

The keynote of success in grading the Sunday school lies in creating interest. Let this be our plat-

**Giants  
and their  
Disposal.**

form. Effort must be centered on making the work attractive. This principle must run through it all. Making work attractive does not mean the introduction of sensational features. It does not mean the engraving of the frivolous or the merely superficial. It does not mean the loss of an iota of the dignity of church work or religious instruction. No, no, no! On the other hand, it means just the opposite of all this. It means the vitalizing of things which to a large proportion of our young people have always seemed to be dead; making possible that which has too often seemed impossible; making knowledge assimilable and appetizing which has too often been administered as a medicine; the establishing of bonds of closer sympathy in work which has been marked by too little of sympathy. In short, as far as the Sunday school is concerned, it means practical revolution.

But can dry things be made attractive? Few things are intrinsically "dry." The unattractive quality of dryness is usually imparted to a subject by environment, by the manner of its treatment, by its apathetic presentation. Can the Sunday school be made attractive? With all its weaknesses, it is often so now. Bend the united energies of a half score of people to accomplishing this end, and note the result. Sympathetic earnestness is attractive. Systematic work can be made very attractive. Achievement is essentially attractive. Young people will be found especially susceptible respecting all of these things.

A thoroughly progressive, well-managed Sunday school is naturally attractive in its details, and is doubly so in its aggregate character. Easily, unre-

The  
Keynote  
of  
Success.

When a  
Thing  
is "Dry."

About Attractiveness.

strainedly and smoothly systematic in its main features, symmetrically arranged, quickly responsive, sympathetically coöperative—of course it will attract. Will these things appeal to young people? Join heartily in creating such a picture for them, and note the result! Take a bright boy into a great business house some day, and show him how thoroughly systematic everything is; how one thing dovetails into another for a purpose; how one mind directs it all, and how the activity of scores of brains is combined in the finished product. Then note how your boy's eyes shine with admiration. That admiration awaits the Sunday school which masses in itself admirable characteristics.

Graded Work a Stimulus.

Without discussing the point in detail just here, let me say that graded work furnishes a stimulus now rarely known in the Sunday school. In no place is special incentive more needed than just here. It is largely furnished by improved environment, the realization that something positive is being done, that some well defined end is to be reached. A healthy stimulus is never dangerous. The graded school provides this healthy stimulus in a natural way.

The Best Kind of Study.

Voluntary study is the best of study, just as voluntary service is the best of service. Born of the will of the student, made a matter of personal choice, it possesses a meaning of its own. Study of Sunday school lessons is largely voluntary, and in the graded Sunday school is almost wholly voluntary. The good student of the lessons becomes the especially loyal member of the school; and by as much as he can be led to improve his lesson, by at least that much is his loyalty to the school intensified. Everything that elevates the standard of the Sunday

school thus adds not only to its dignity and usefulness, but to its organic strength.

That graded work in the Sunday school is feasible, and in every way promotive of its highest interests, is a matter of demonstration. Here and there in our schools is a teacher who for years has been working along lines somewhat similar to those proposed. These teachers not only carry along the regular lessons in a comparatively thorough way, but many of them arrange extra work beside. What is the result? I call upon you, reader, to witness that the classes thus taught are the most regular in their attendance, the most orderly in their conduct, the most enthusiastic in their attitude toward school interests of every kind. I also ask you to witness that the irregular, disloyal, disorderly, unreliable classes are in the hands of teachers who have no standard, who establish no requirements, and who come farthest of all short of working in a systematic way.

The superintendent looks out over the school, and wishes in his heart that he had more classes managed in just this way. He knows that his burdens would be lightened, his school strengthened, and all of his difficult problems solved, could he multiply this type of class all over the room. And do you know, reader, that this is equivalent to wishing that his school were conducted on at least an approximation to the graded system?

The Sunday school is too often attended because of habit, and a sense of duty, rather than for other and better reasons. Habit is not to be despised as a character builder, and a sense of duty has prevented many a spiritless church undertaking from being an utter failure; but it is possible to have the rooms

Here is  
the  
Proof.

An  
Earnest  
Wish.

The  
Best  
of all  
Incen-  
tives.

well filled from a better motive than either. The Sunday school properly graded and well conducted, where a high order of work is accomplished, and where the standard is always kept well aloft, is a place to which people soon learn to *love* to come. No attendance is so large, so regular, so enthusiastic, so enjoyable, and so fruitful of good, as that which is made up of people who *want* to attend; and no Sunday school has touched the keynote of great success until it learns that it must not only have the respect of the neighborhood but must have a place in its affections as well. These it should have, and officers and teachers should not rest until it is in full and undisputed possession of this point of vantage in energizing and popularizing the school.

I do not need to point the moral indicated by the paragraphs of this chapter. It is altogether obvious. Grading is not only feasible—it is almost imperative. It is not a question of what is needed, or what the next step in Sunday school progress should be. The real question is, Do we *want* better things badly enough to pay the reasonable price at which they can be secured?

## CHAPTER IV.

## BASAL DIFFICULTIES.

In discussing the feasibility of grading we are met at the outset by the lack of a universally accepted text-book as a foundation for our work. In order to facilitate Bible study for people of all ages and all degrees of attainment, modern lesson helps have been planned. With all their faults, and in spite of their dilution of the truth, they have served a useful purpose, and could illy be spared except a new dispensation should provide us something better.

The Bible as a whole, a collection of inspired books by a number of authors, is not arranged in itself for graded study, or for systematic study of any kind. It is given to man as a treasure house, in which by searching he may find gems of priceless value. But as to the manner in which the quest is to be conducted in detail never a word is furnished. The warrant for the search is given in John 5:39; and right there the problem is left for man himself to solve, aided by the light for which he is directed to ask.

For hundreds of years men have been writing on how to study the Bible. Many of their books are of rare excellence, yet they have been written from so many standpoints as to be impossible of general adoption. They are written for students, too, and those only of mature years, while grading contemplates class work by everybody from toddling child to aged grandsire. It is not by voluminous books that the equipment for efficient graded work is to be secured. We must look farther.

Bible  
Study.

Books  
about  
the  
Bible.

THE MARY E. BIVINS LIBRARY  
of  
THE SOUTHWEST CHRISTIAN SEMINARY

Some  
Perplex-  
ing  
Problems.

A special difficulty in preparing for well considered graded study lies in finding the place in the Bible for the beginning, for each progressive step in proper succession, and for the natural finish for such a course. With each of these agreed upon, such questions as the following naturally arise: Should the student go over the course only once? How long a period should the course cover? Should all parts of the Bible be included, and if not who shall say what shall be omitted? In carrying out the purposes of Bible study is it not necessary to recur frequently to those parts more vitally related to the Christian life? Must all new pupils of whatever age begin at the same time, at the same place?

A  
Solution  
Expected.

These puzzling questions might be continued indefinitely. The few cited illustrate, however, the perplexing nature of the problem. That a satisfactory solution will be reached I have no manner of doubt. It must come, though, as a result of years of prayerful experiment, and must be worked out, as the International system has been worked out, to the satisfaction of Christendom. It may come as an adaptation of the International lessons to new conditions—conditions which are crowding on apace. Who knows? It is not the province of this book, or the purpose of the writer, to attempt the solution. This will come naturally in the fullness of time.

When to  
Begin.

But this higher order of work in the Sunday school cannot await the coming of the new order of things. Indeed the coming of these better things is contingent upon such beginning as we are able to make. Because we cannot have the ideal at once, must we never start toward it? There is but one thing to do, and that is to begin—and begin now.

But how? By availing ourselves of just what we have, and to the best advantage. The great majority of our schools are using the International lessons. Let these schools continue, for the present at least, with these lessons, other schools adhering to their own present systems. These systems, or any systems worthy of the name, furnish bases upon which glorious superstructures can be reared—if we will do the kind of work necessary to secure such results. We have never half appreciated the advantages afforded by lesson plans of universal acceptance, and the Sunday school world is now living at a poor dying rate because of this lack of appreciation.

We need not bother our heads in the beginning with anything greater than the doing well of that which we have heretofore been doing all too poorly. We can grade our Sunday schools sufficiently on the present lesson basis to infinitely elevate our standards—and when that is accomplished we will be in position to talk about and intelligently undertake the greater things. Workable plans, suitable literature and all needed facilities will come when the Sunday school world shall indicate that it is ready for them. My plea is for the needy teachers and pupils of our own day and hour.

But, says some one, the International lesson system is antagonistic to the grading idea. You have heard this statement made again and again; but what is really true is that this system (1) does not contemplate a graduated, progressive course of study extending over a term of years, and (2) it does not select its lessons with reference to any age of pupils. These are difficulties much more easily surmountable than those connected with any proposed

How  
to  
Begin.

About  
the  
Future.

The  
Inter-  
na-  
tional  
System.

untried system, and are really less serious than they at first appear. Assigning to these difficulties, though, and any others which present themselves, their full value, is there anything else to which we can now turn with equal confidence?

It is the King's business, and it requireth haste. The prestige of the Sunday school is in danger. Its usefulness is impaired. Its magnificent constituency is slighted. Something must be done. All agree that this something must energize the institution and attract its wavering adherents. Is there anything else to which we can resort that is so feasible and so reasonable as that which has just been proposed?

**Severing Old Ties.** In a change from old to new methods some other drawbacks must be noted, which, however, mainly disappear on investigation. One of these is the severing of old ties. A class and teacher often grow to be almost a part of each other, and each is disposed to shrink from the idea of separation. This does not prove, though, that such separation is not frequently advisable. Indeed it is often the case that in instances of this kind but little progress is made, the teacher being easy, genial and not at all exacting, and the pupils while recognizing these amiable qualities adding but little from year to year to their store of biblical knowledge. There are cases, perhaps, in which the severing of this relationship is a matter for serious consideration, but they are not usual.

**A Mistaken Teacher.** There is frequent misapprehension in this connection on the part of the teacher. The teacher long with certain pupils sometimes becomes possessed of the idea that the pupils' allegiance to the school is because of this relationship. In a great majority of cases this is a clear misconception. On the other

hand, the pupil's loyalty is sometimes in spite of the supposed strong tie. I have known teachers to hold this opinion concerning pupils who were absolutely anxious for a change of teachers. The losses to school membership from changes of teachers on a fixed plan of grading are certain to be slight. Indeed it is within reason to say that the regaining of pupils lost through the failure to change these same teachers will probably compensate for all losses.

The pain of such separation is mainly felt by the teacher, with whom it may long linger. With the young pupil it is usually a transient emotion, fully dispelled by the contemplation of something new to come. A teacher of experience says that "The pupil is willing to give up any teacher for the sake of recognition and promotion." This is a panacea of almost unfailing efficacy. None of us like to think that we can so soon drop out of lives to which we have borne a responsible relation, but that such is the law of nature is proved by the equanimity with which as the years pass we view the losses we once regarded as unbearable. The teacher's compensation lies in retaining the tender respect of those once held in close association, and forming connections of the same kind with new lives and characters.

A  
Panacea  
for  
Separation.

Even the most thorough grading of the Sunday school, though, does not involve sudden and frequent separation of teachers and classes. There is no reason why the two should not remain together, if desirable, through an entire department, and this usually covers a period of years. So that at most these trying experiences cannot be of frequent occurrence.

A more important disadvantage to the teacher retained in a single juvenile grade is the lack of contact

**Lesson  
Association  
with  
Children.**

with more mature minds in the discussion of the lesson. Almost as much is lost, though, by the teacher who takes the class from the beginning to the finish in the ordinary school, so much time being consumed in passing through childhood grades. Besides the lesson studied is usually the same, and the views and questions of bright children are not without value even to the teacher who longs for lesson intercourse with older people. No teacher is shut off from such intercourse, either, for all have the privileges of the Teachers' Meeting. Thorough grading does not necessarily contemplate different lessons, but presentations of the same lesson in ways adapted to the several grades. Were this a serious drawback, however, it could only be set down as another of the sacrifices which every devoted teacher is ready to make for the Sunday school.

**Personal  
Friend-  
ships.**

A more serious trouble is the matter of personal friendships between pupils. These close friendships are advantageous while the "cronies" are working side by side in a grade to which both naturally belong, and when well matched in age. When driven apart by legitimate classification, or disparity in years, the result is sometimes unfortunate. Teachers frequently aggravate troubles of this kind by unduly magnifying them. The separation should be good naturally assumed to be a matter of course. The teacher is watched very closely for a "cue" in matters of this kind. If one of the "cronies" to be separated is noticeably the stronger of the two, a judicious private appeal to his stronger will sometimes removes the difficulty. It is unwise, though, to seek the help of a pupil in any such case unless clearly indicated by circumstances.

## CHAPTER V.

## GENERAL ESSENTIALS.

What are some of the preliminary essentials in undertaking to change from the old way of doing things to the plan of working which within a few years will be adopted by the most progressive Sunday schools everywhere? Here are some practical suggestions:

As a beginning, let the superintendent, officers and teachers, together with the pastor and such active workers as will come into consultation, meet and discuss the entire subject thoroughly. The superintendent and pastor at least should have consulted about it previously, deciding upon its desirability, and gathering all possible data concerning it. Let these data be submitted to this general council. Talk it over dispassionately and earnestly, and look at it from every side. If all agree to take the advanced step let the very best possible committee be appointed at once to consider and report upon details. If a practically unanimous decision cannot be reached at this meeting, quietly talk the matter over with those who hesitate, and when they come to see the advantages of the proposed change, as they in the end will, call another meeting and take the step already mentioned.

A  
General  
Consulta-  
tion.

It is necessary that there be perfect unanimity at the start. It is a case which will not admit of divided counsels. Do not begin with a contingent or tentative determination to grade the school. Let there be no peradventure about the movement. It is only

when thoroughly committed to it that the school can count on success. The eyes of young people are very quick to see the weakness of a position assumed with hesitation and in a half-hearted way:—and when such weakness is discovered, the difficulties of the undertaking are greatly multiplied.

**Have a Clear Under-standing.** It is no less essential to have a perfect understanding of the work ahead. Every certain or probable obstacle which can be thought of should be brought up for consideration, and carefully weighed, so as to avoid disconcerting surprises later. Minimize nothing. Look even the most discouraging conditions squarely in the face, and prepare for meeting them—not for avoiding or concealing them. Let every officer, teacher and unofficial worker thoroughly understand what is to be done, and be brought into close touch with every other officer, teacher and worker. In no other way can any Sunday school work of importance be carried to a successful conclusion. Right here let the unsympathetic, the doubting, the obstructing step aside from the official ranks.

**Recognition of Authority.** That prompt recognition of and perfect subordination to properly constituted authority, which is so necessary in all Sunday school work, is doubly necessary in establishing the graded school. Let it be understood that the movement has the deliberate judgment and hearty approval of the officers of the church behind it, and that the Sunday school management is fully commissioned to carry out this expressed will of the church. Then let the plans of the superintendent, or of the committee in charge, be followed implicitly and without question (these plans having been approved by the council). There may

be wisdom in a multitude of counsellors in the adoption of a general policy, but the voice of the multitude in the arrangement of details is unavoidable confusion. It is in the council of war that the wisdom of details may be discussed—never on the field of battle. To expect the executive officer of the school to consult his helpers at any point, except in council or in an emergency, farther than in his judgment he may think best, is to introduce an element of uncertainty which is demoralizing.

Another essential is simplicity in plans. While perfect system is indispensable, tedious elaboration is a danger to be avoided. Of two plans for the Sunday school which seem to be equally meritorious in their essentials it is *always* the part of wisdom to choose the simpler. Many a well considered campaign of progress in this work has failed because of unnecessary multiplication of details. That Sunday school in which grading is in most danger of signal failure, other conditions being satisfactory, is the school which undertakes too much, and which in the undertaking is too lavish in the use of red tape. We want *not* too much plan, but "just a plenty."

It is also necessary in the contemplated revolution in the Sunday school that the plans, having been adapted to all parts of the school, shall be introduced in all departments at the same time. To begin otherwise is to invite confusion and lose the greatest opportunity in the history of the institution. Every superintendent wishes from time to time for an occasion which will permit him to "begin new," and furnish indisputable ground for making needed changes. The beginning of grading furnishes just this occasion, and to make it effective the changes which it brings

Simplicity in Plans

Beginning Together.

must be school-wide in their application *at the same time*. To illustrate, although much less can be done in grading in the adult division of the school than among the children, yet that little must be done at the one time when the greatest impulse can be given to the entire movement. Having thus begun together, let all departments *keep* together in the same relative positions right along. Just how this general school symmetry is promotive of general success must be seen to be fully realized.

The need of a campaign of education must not be overlooked. Many a heart never receives the truth simply because the truth has never been personally, patiently and lovingly presented. Even one individual who has carefully studied the subject of grading may revolutionize an entire community by persistent personal effort. The working force of a Sunday school should be able to do the same thing more easily and more certainly. The matter must be "talked up," pastor and people working side by side in the good cause. This campaign should open just far enough ahead of the introduction of the change in the school to have the change come as nearly as possible at a time when interest in the subject is at a climax—say a month or so in advance. The tactical advantage of this attention to dates will be apparent.

Let the teachers talk it over in the classes—not doubtingly or hesitatingly, but confidently and reassuringly. There will be some objection, which should be treated lightly. This objection will disappear in good time if the subject is well and earnestly presented. Approving sentiment will have to be created, and if the teachers approach the work in the

A Cam-  
paign  
of  
Education.

In the  
Classes.

proper spirit and with unanimity the result will be accomplished. It is the experience everywhere that opposition has only to *understand* in order to disappear.

Let it also be explained to the pupils that in the preliminary grading the positions which they already hold will not be unfavorably affected—that is to say, the question affecting the pupil will be, Shall he remain where he is, or go higher? that in no case will it consign him to a lower grade.

As simple as they are, these suggestions cannot be safely ignored. These steps having been taken, the school is ready for the very best work in its history. Once fairly under way, the system provides for its own contingencies and perpetuation, and may be safely left in the hands of people who have shown any aptitude whatever for work in the Sunday school.

Not to  
be  
Retro-  
graded.

## CHAPTER VI.

## OLD AND NEW PRINCIPLES.

When grading has been determined upon, and the preliminary steps have been taken, we are ready for the consideration of the principles which must govern in carrying on the work, and which must distinguish this work from that to which we have been accustomed. Some of these principles are old, some of them are new—all of them must have a part in governing. They are basal and essential.

**Measuring  
the  
Sunday  
School  
Life.**

1. The Sunday school life of every child connected with the institution must be measured in advance in its entirety, this life being subdivided into distinct periods, each period possessing features peculiar to no other period, and providing work differing to a greater or less degree from that of any other period; all progressively arranged for reaching a positive end. The same principle is to be applied with some modifications to the youth of the school, and tentatively to the adult divisions. For the present at least this comprehensive plan of work must be so arranged as to conflict in no way with established lesson systems. It must mean both the better development and adaptation of these and the introduction of other lesson features calculated to round out, simplify and systematize religious instruction. This means the blending of established systems with progressive courses of study. These courses of study will be discussed in another chapter.

Condition  
of  
Promotion.

2. The passing of pupils from one of these periods to another must be because of the recognition of absolute attainment of some kind. Certain things stipulated to be taught in a given period must be learned in that period before the way is clear for entry into the next. While this condition is to be interpreted in a common sense way, it cannot be waived. It is of course understood that the requirements here must be modified as compared with those of schools of other kinds; yet this modification must in no way prejudice the standard of work or the respect in which it is held.

3. Instruction must be more broadly elementary. There is a prevalent impression that the simple incidental facts of Bible instruction which lie on the surface are to be taught to small children only. The result is that a list of questions identically the same asked of a Junior class and of a Bible class will elicit twice as many correct answers in the former case as in the latter. I taught a Bible class recently in which a teacher was incidentally located for the day. I asked her to name the father of Solomon, and although I referred to him as the shepherd boy who became king, and pointed to him in other unmistakable ways, she was utterly unable to answer the question. It is taken for granted in Sunday school instruction that otherwise intelligent people—even church members—know a great deal of which they are really profoundly ignorant, and (let me tell the whole truth) *shamelessly ignorant*.

Empha-  
sizing the  
Elemen-  
tary.

Any effort at elevating the standard of Sunday school instruction which does not include a liberal measure of elementary work all along the line is not worth considering. It is on the knowledge of these

**Wholesome  
and  
Fundamental.**

things so easily known that progress from grade to grade should be mainly recognized, and it is only when religious education contains a substratum of this kind of palpable fact that it becomes of appreciable value. Teaching may be made thus wholesome and fundamental without in the least incurring the danger of degenerating into the childish. Of the church-going masses of our day it may be truthfully said that "a little child *does* lead them" in a knowledge of holy things. Grading the Sunday school must help to take away this reproach.

**The Neces-  
sity of  
Adaptation.**

4. The element of adaptation must figure more largely in the work of instruction. There is a lack of flexibility in modes of teaching. Class methods need to be adopted more with a few individuals in view than with reference to a hard-and-fast preconceived plan of action. The representative teacher needs to be more of an individual, original force in the class than a too close imitator of even the best of teaching models. Let the pupil find a personality keenly interested in his individual achievement, and ready to adapt method to that achievement. The student in danger of college failure avails himself of a personal tutor. Let the teacher stand ready to bear the relation of tutor to the halting pupil. O, how such a relationship helps both teacher and pupil! The two are *working together* for an end, and when the teacher is ready to *so* work the probabilities of disappointment in the outcome are greatly lessened.

5. At the risk of introducing a point which may be considered irrelevant just here, let me add what I believe to be a principle of as great importance as any of those named. It is unwise to adopt anybody's

plan of grading in exact detail as presented. Every bit of available information or suggestion on the subject should be secured and digested, and such parts chosen as will exactly suit your special case. Out of it all a plan of *your own* may be evolved. It may be almost like the plan of some other school, but if not *exactly* adapted to yours make such changes as will insure the adaptation to be as nearly perfect as possible. You will think more of this amended plan than of any other, will feel more interest in its success, and its local adaptation will greatly assist in tying the community fast to it.

The writers of books and the editors and contributors of Sunday school periodicals are doing a great work in our country. Writing from countless standpoints, and guided by ever-varying experiences, they are furnishing a wealth of suggestion which is invaluable. But it is only *suggestion* after all. What they say is not designed to supplant that original planning which is a strong point in the success of every Sunday school which is sufficiently well known to be cited as a model. Let these people *help* you, but do not let the work of anybody else take the place of that indefinable something which makes an enterprise *your own*.

Making  
the  
Plan  
Your  
Own.

Helpful  
Suggestion  
Only.

## CHAPTER VII.

## TEACHERS AND GRADING.

Reorgan-  
izing  
Thoroughly  
—Provided.

In discussing teachers and grading let us, first of all, recognize that teaching is the center around which the Sunday school revolves—the means by which its great work is to be accomplished. We organize the Sunday school for no other reason than that people may be taught. We reorganize it every year, closely inspecting the make-up of its officers, making such changes as are deemed best, revising the plans, and fearlessly doing very many things which the welfare of the school may seem to demand —up to a certain point. This fearlessness reaches its limit, though, when we come to the organization of the teachers. Here the principle that all changes which the true interests of the school call for should be made without hesitation is expected to be tempered with the qualification that this shall be so done as not to interfere with ideas which teachers themselves may have as to whom they should teach. It is right here that a time-honored prejudice is met with, and, strongly as it is intrenched, the introduction of a thorough system of grading is certain to result in its ultimate overthrow. As things now are, its teaching is both the pride and the shame of the Sunday school. The element of shame must be eliminated from the situation.

If, then, teaching is the most important part of the school work, it is all the more necessary that it be

subjected to as absolute regulation as anything else connected with the school; that the tenure of office of the teacher be, as is that of the superintendent, a matter of expediency; and that the judgment of an appointed teacher shall not be the sole criterion, as is too often the case, as to the choice of classes to be taught. A given teacher and a given class should be combined *only* on the satisfying of certain conditions. The teacher must be as much the creature of the organization, subject to assignment or rejection, as is the superintendent or any other officer. This principle must be recognized absolutely and without qualification in every Sunday school which is preparing to do the best work.

Every individual responsibly connected with the Sunday school can work better and accomplish more in some positions than in other positions. This is emphatically true of the teacher. Every teacher is better adapted to classes of a certain age or grade than to classes of any other age or grade. Just as the matter and manner of teaching must if successful vary with the age and attainment of those who are taught, so one who has proven efficient in teaching classes of a certain degree of advancement should be retained for such classes. No principle in education is better established than this, and so thoroughly is it recognized that it governs without question in educational work of all kinds outside of the Sunday school. If in a graded school of any other kind the teachers should begin with the Primary room, and move with the same pupils from room to room until graduation, that school would at once deteriorate in the quality of its work and be passed by for other schools conducted on modern principles.

This  
Teacher  
for this  
Class, if—

Each  
in the  
Proper  
Place.

**The  
Sunday  
School  
not  
Exempted.**

What is there in the Sunday school that exempts it from this law of the schools evolved from the experience of centuries? Why should the work of the Sunday school teacher instead be aimed at a few individuals through perhaps a long term of years in the class—individuals who are thus handicapped from learning anything else except what that particular teacher may know, and whose views of religious life are thus shaped from a single and possibly a narrow standpoint?

**The  
Teacher  
to do  
One  
Thing.**

The Sunday school teacher should, as a fundamental consideration, be a Primary teacher, or a Junior teacher, or an Intermediate teacher, or a Senior teacher—rarely if ever being these in a regular succession which is governed by the progress of certain pupils through these various grades. The teacher should belong to the department through which the pupil passes, instead of passing from one department to the next with the pupil. There may be an occasional teacher who can work in different departments equally well—but such teachers are rare. Even such a teacher will do better in one field.

**Advantages  
of Staying  
in One  
Place.**

Many manifest advantages to the teacher arise out of confining class work to a single department. One of these is the variety afforded as the classes change from grade to grade in passing. Coming in contact with new children from time to time is restful. It also gives an opportunity for the study of new lives and characters, which is most helpful. The fact of accepting pupils from a teacher in another grade is an incentive to so teach that a comparison of the two teachers in the mind of the pupil may not be to the disparagement of the change. There is a corresponding stimulus in preparing the class for

graduation to a higher grade. These changes undoubtedly furnish a great and much needed stimulus to better teaching work. Having a regular course of study by which to guide one's work is an advantage which a teacher who is looking for means by which to reach greater efficiency will not be slow to appreciate. The greatest good of all, though, comes from constant familiarity and practice in training minds of a certain age, which practice produces everywhere the most efficient type of teacher the world has ever known.

In the professions, in the industries—everywhere—the world is looking for people who have done certain things over and over again, until they practically know all about the doing of these certain things that can be known. These people are called experts. The Sunday school which allows its teachers to be constantly changing from one division to another rarely produces an expert. Its teachers are largely tyros. We have too many tyros, and need experts. The plan outlined produces them.

The class is equally the gainer by this system. The little folks are fond of change, to begin with, and always look forward to it with pleasant anticipation. Then there is an advantage in finding a trained instructor with new methods at every step. There is something new to think about. There is less of monotony and less of probability of the pupil tiring of the class and of the school. In the slow development of a class which is for several years in the hands of a single teacher there is danger of the teacher forgetting that food suitable for children is not suitable for young men and young women—that the day when the little Bible story is all-sufficient is past, and

The  
Call for  
Experts.

How the  
Class  
Gains.

that rapidly maturing minds are waiting to be fed and trained. Many a good class has died because as adults its members were insufficiently fed, through a misapprehension of changed conditions. In the graded school this danger is obviated.

These observations point to a necessity of the grading of the available teaching force which should be even more thorough than the grading of the pupils. There is this difference, however: The assignment of a number of accepted teachers is not so much on the ground of their relative knowledge as compared with each other as because of personal characteristics which adapt them more particularly as instructors to the several grades of the school. Who shall say, after inspecting the Primary room, the Junior and Intermediate classes, and the department of adults, that more talent is needed in one place than in another? Relative natural talent and mental furnishing are only two out of a number of considerations which the superintendent or committee of assignment must have in mind.

It is the preliminary grading of teachers that affords the most puzzling feature of their assignment to duty. Once in place, there is little further difficulty. However, careful consultation with them individually, a review of their experience, a recalling of the peculiar aptnesses which they have shown in different situations, will usually combine to furnish a satisfactory solution of this problem which comes up so early in preparing for the introduction of the new system. By no means the least of the advantages necessarily attending the inauguration of grading is the way in which it brings home to teachers the measure of their practical incapacity and stimulates to

**Above all,  
Thoroughly  
Grade the  
Teachers.**

**About  
Prelimi-  
nary  
Grading.**

higher effort. A very good committee should give the grading of the teachers their special care

The natural tendency of careful grading will be found to be the numerical increase of the force of teachers required. This may not work out in every school, and yet schools in which more teachers are not called for because of this are exceptional. This points to the subject of teacher training, which is an indispensable adjunct of graded work—a subject treated in the chapter on the Normal class, in another part of this book.

No Sunday school can safely undertake careful grading which does not sustain a Teachers' Meeting. This meeting is of inestimable value in any Sunday school, but is indispensable if grading is contemplated. The use of the Teachers' Meeting will be discussed in a separate chapter.

Increasing  
the  
Teaching  
Force.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CONSIDERATIONS IN GRADING PUPILS.

The feasibility of grading teachers has already been discussed. Let us see how the system affects the pupils.

Children and Grading. Children are accustomed to close grading in everything else of an educational character with which they are connected. This is not with them the introduction of a new principle, for it is something with which they are thoroughly familiar in the day school, and which they naturally expect as an element in education. It is the older people, in whose school days modern ideas of grading were not developed, who in particular fail to see and fall in with the idea.

Specific Lessons at Specific Times. Recognizing the correctness of the principle of grading in everything else in which they are taught, the children get the idea that the Sunday school, because of this difference, is an affair in which it signifies but little whether they learn or not. Accustomed as they are to having specific lessons to learn at specific times, an institution in which there is nothing of this kind comes to be regarded as of slight importance, until as they approach manhood and womanhood their respect for it has grown less and less, and a time arrives when they are retained in their classes with difficulty, if they do not altogether turn their backs on the school. In looking for reasons why it is so difficult to hold the older

young people in the Sunday school it seems singular that the insufficiency and the inefficiency of the teaching are rarely cited as having any appreciable bearing on the case.

The children need the stimulus of definite things to learn, and the definite evidence of such things having been learned. Rewards such as may be useful in affecting regularity of attendance, etc., cannot be introduced with propriety or with good results in connection with attainment. The grading of the school and the establishing of courses of study, however, furnishes occasions for the issuing of certificates or diplomas, or the visible passing from grade to grade, all of which is in exact accordance with the traditions of school life, appeals to the pupil as practicable and sensible, and satisfies the requirement that there shall be both an end and a positive way by which the end may be reached.

The bright pupil in the day school, accustomed to finding the exercise of his talents as a student result in his being classed with pupils beyond his age, sits listless in the Sunday school because of the lack of similar recognition, and soon discovers that no matter what he may do an older boy who knows much less stands away above him in classification. As a result he becomes discontented, stops short off in the development of a man who might some day become a power in the Sunday school and church, and later as a talented young professional man considers the Sunday school a place for only lazy or dull people. Where are the most of the young professional men of the country, of religious families, as regards Sunday school and church activities?

**The  
Stimulus  
of the  
Definite.**

**A Point  
Against the  
Sunday  
School.**

**About the  
Dull Boy.**

In the ungraded school the dull boy finds no stimulus to exertion. If he can barely make out to read, the development of his physical person and the increase of his years will transfer him step by step to the higher divisions without further effort. Study is distasteful, and as it serves no purpose as far as his recognized standing among his fellows is concerned, he bothers himself but little about it. In the day school this same boy, who has in him all the stuff of which the very best and most useful men may be made, must work if he would hold his visible grade, and this necessity keeps him within the reach of his fellows. Place the same necessity before him in the Sunday school, and the same result will follow. He will stay with his class. Do not both the classes of boys mentioned know away down in their hearts that the Sunday school as we find it now is not honest with itself or with its pupils as regards the position of the latter in the classes? And, knowing this, does not the school suffer in their esteem?

**Stimulating  
Attend-  
ance.**

Another beneficial effect of the stimulus of definite work is manifested in the attendance. Children who are associated in day school in certain classes and studies form a fellowship which may without difficulty be transferred to the carefully graded Sunday school. A careless girl or boy here and there is swept into the column of developing young people who without this graduation with their fellows from grade to grade would be missed from the Sunday school altogether. It is the testimony of graded school workers that this is the usual result.

But, says an objector, this will drive out of the Sunday school many an illiterate, naturally slow, incapable child, who cannot possibly keep within the classification of children of the same age. Will this be a new development, or can it be set down as a consequence of careful grading? In the hit-or-miss classification of schools as we find them has there not always been in the infant class the child a head taller than the others? Does not the Intermediate department invariably contain a boy here and there who can with ease carry off one of his fellows under each arm? Is the physical giant a rarity among the advanced pupils? We have always had these odd pupils, and what have we done with them?

We want to do with them under the advanced system just what we have done with them before, only neglecting them less and looking after them with more painstaking, loving care. The teacher has always had to favor as far as practicable pupils of this character. Other pupils recognize this necessity to an extent, and will usually look with complacency on the special efforts of the teacher to keep such pupils in line. Thoughtless boys and girls are sometimes inclined to make it unpleasant for the plodders, but this is no new development. If the tactful teacher will visit such pupils privately, and help them in the preparation of their more difficult lessons, the result will be marked, and this, together with passing them upward on the bare satisfaction of the stipulated conditions, which most pupils will achieve by a good margin, will do much to obviate the difficulties of the case. No pupil is likely to more appreciate a certificate

Not  
New,  
After  
All.

A  
Natural  
Way  
out of a  
Difficulty.

of advancement than this one, provided his personal interest can be aroused; and this end is worth all the extra effort which the teacher can put forth.

A Possible  
Choice of  
Evils.

In this point, nevertheless, the objector has brought forward the greatest difficulty connected with the grading system. It is a difficulty, in spite of all efforts to remove it. However, it is not much greater than under the old plan, and it is even better to continue to lose an occasional pupil as before, as much to be regretted as such a result may be, than to reject a plan which is certain to bring to the Sunday school, as no other plan has ever done, the greatest good to the greatest number.

It is not generally proposed to introduce the grading system in detail in the Bible class division of the Sunday school. It is here, if anywhere, that the scheme is likely to prove impracticable in many of its phases. When people have gone past their school days, and cease to be in touch with regulations requiring study, their attention to anything educational is more of an incidental character. Therefore the grading of the school must be greatly modified when this class of attendants is reached. A few years under the graded system, though, develops a kind of Bible classes the Sunday school has not before known.

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## CHAPTER IX.

## LOCATING PUPILS.

Outside of the Bible class division, which will not be discussed in this connection, Sunday school classes should not be large. This is especially true in the carefully graded school. It is better that the range be from six to ten members to the class, if circumstances will allow such division. The size of classes is to some extent necessarily contingent upon the number of good teachers available, as even large classes with good teachers are preferable to better proportioned classes in poor hands. The indifferent teacher is sometimes a necessary evil, but should not be employed unless classes are so large and unwieldy as to demand division.

Better  
Large  
Classes  
than  
Poor  
Teachers.

It may always be taken for granted that a well managed Sunday school will grow. It is therefore better in organizing or reorganizing to have the classes arranged below the size limit rather than full, sometimes even in skeleton form—provided the necessary teachers are at hand. The evident abundance of room affords an incentive for class missionary work, and the building up of the skeleton class. If the school is to be closely graded the pupils should be so divided and subdivided as to avoid a wide range of individual attainment in a single class. The ability to carry such division as far as desirable is contingent upon the size of the school, it being sometimes necessary in a small school to include in a single class pupils who would

Organizing  
in  
Skeleton  
Form.

not otherwise be graded together. In large schools there are often more pupils of a single grade than can well be taught in a single class. In such cases there may be two or more classes of the same sex and grade, it being remembered that outside of the Primary room and Bible classes it is better that the sexes be in separate classes.

Reorganization furnishes the opportunity for studying the situation and arranging the classes symmetrically. Pains should be taken to do this very thoroughly all over the school at the time of the adoption of graded work. This done, it remains to exercise care in the assignment of new pupils and in promotion from grade to grade. Laxness at this point will result in almost irremediable confusion, and invites failure for the entire undertaking.

As the new pupil enters the Sunday school, a glance and a brief question or two usually suffice for a decision by the assigning officer as to where to place him and what "quarterly" to give him. In the graded school the investigation must go farther. A thorough preliminary examination is not feasible, and an offhand assignment is not to be thought of. Questions about special biblical attainment are framed and asked with difficulty under the circumstances, and envelop the whole interview in embarrassment for the pupil. A pertinent and proper inquiry in the case will bring out the standing of the newcomer in the day school, and in the absence of further positive information this may furnish the needed cue. Circumstances may sometimes suggest the mention of age as a chief factor, but it is preferable that the matter be decided without reference to this if possible. If

there are two or three classes of the same grade it is well to learn whether the applicant has friends and associates in either, locating him accordingly.

The importance of care right here cannot be too strongly emphasized. It should first be ascertained whether the proposed membership in the Sunday school is expected to be permanent. It should be assumed without mentioning it that the whole question of assignment is expected to be in the hands of the officer, and it should be settled by that individual without apparent hesitation, unless the pupil himself should introduce his preferences. If these nick with the proprieties of the case the course is plain. If they clearly place the pupil where he should not go, a little friendly reasoning will frequently settle the matter satisfactorily. If persistent in wishing to enter the wrong class the adjustment may require some effort. It will be recognized, though, that the voluntary applicant for membership in the Sunday school is usually easily dealt with in the matter of location. It is those whom special friends bring who are located with the greatest difficulty. All of the interviews referred to, if conducted pleasantly and with tact, are mutually enjoyable and satisfactory.

When not running counter to other considerations, the social preferences of children may always be recognized to advantage, although for obvious reasons it is best not to consult with them about these preferences. Care should be taken, always, not to create social lines, and, above all, to quietly obliterate them when accident or design has developed them. The class is a little democracy, over which the shadow of caste should never be thrown.

A Task  
Requir-  
ing  
Firmness  
and  
Tact.

Care as  
to  
Social  
Lines.

## CHAPTER X.

## IRREGULAR PUPILS.

**A Variety of Irregulars.** Irregular pupils are of several kinds. There are those who join the school after the introduction of grading, and who are too advanced or too old for the Primary room. Another contingent is made up of those who are members right along, but who are irregular in attendance and cannot be depended upon for regular or consecutive work. Then there are those who, through accident, sickness or absence from home, are seriously interfered with in their work. A fourth variety "happen in" from time to time, or wander from school to school in migratory fashion, affording no school an opportunity of doing anything substantial for them. What is to be done with all of these pupils?

**Perfect Grading in the Primary Room.** At the inception of grading it is probable that the only really perfectly graded part of the school will be found in the Primary room. It is possible here to start out with things just as they should be. The little folks are easily divisible on lines of attainment, and their promotion from grade to grade comes about in an easy and natural way. As the years go by, and these same children who began at the beginning advance they will naturally form a nucleus of well graded pupils in every division of the school. Conditions somewhat similar, but less perfect, can be established at the start in the Junior classes, something of class symmetry being lost, however, as the school grades upward.

There has been difficulty from the start in getting pupils in the Junior and Intermediate departments who are not graduates from the lower grades properly classified. Conditions here, under these circumstances, are seldom ideal. Teachers and officers are compelled to be satisfied with approximations to what they desire. It is too much to claim that immediate results in these departments can be more than relative. It is to these classes thus situated, that the "irregulars" are to be added, in the hope that they may be assimilated.

Reference was made in the last chapter to the entrance of the new pupil, and some considerations mentioned in connection with his disposal by the assigning officer. While not a disturbing element in the sense of being unwelcome, his coming nevertheless is a very puzzling factor in class work, the problem being different in the case of each new pupil received. How shall the teacher treat the newcomer in respect to the unsatisfied requirements of the particular grade through which the class is then passing—taking it for granted that the novitiate has not been trained in any Sunday school, much less in a graded one?

In the first place, the pupil thus received must be placed in a class of an age corresponding more or less nearly to his own. A difference of a year or two may not signify, though the discrepancy should be as slight as circumstances will allow. While he and they are side by side in the day school, the boys of his own age in the Sunday school know a good deal more about the things taught in the Sunday school than he does. He must make good this deficiency if he is to remain with them and

How  
about  
the  
New  
Pupil?

Keeping  
the  
Pupil with  
his  
Fellows.

pass with them into the next higher classification. What shall the teacher do?

The case is a plain one. The teacher should arrange at the earliest possible date for a visit to or from the new pupil. Let the situation be fully discussed, the requirements made just as light as is consistent with satisfying the conditions, and a program for making up the missing lessons prepared. Let this program cover only such things as are necessary to passing into the next grade. This work will be easy—if the teacher will join the pupil in its prosecution. A few interviews, which should not be discussed before the class, will probably suffice. At the same time a good of at least equal value has been accomplished: The pupil has found the teacher a helper and friend, and that right on the threshold of their acquaintance. Pupils whose work has been interfered with by sickness or absence from home may be helped into good lesson standing in the same way. No prescribed course of Sunday school study, of any other than an elective character, should be so heavy or so exacting that omissions cannot be made good.

**A Very  
Difficult  
Case.**

The pupil who is irregular in attendance, and cannot be induced to take up and prosecute steady work, presents a trouble not so easily compassed. These pupils, like sin, are always with us, though persistent effort will keep their number small. There is now and then a case of a wholly incorrigible character. Two kinds of treatment suggest themselves: One is to allow these pupils to suffer the penalty of their negligence by remaining in their grade when their fellows are promoted; the other, which cannot be recommended, is to form

**A Good  
Find for  
the  
Pupil.**

separate mixed classes for them, from pupils of their kind. To admit them to promotion along with those who rise by merit is to take all the meaning out of promotion, and entirely defeat the purpose of grading. This is not to be thought of;—better the unfortunate alternative of their leaving the school, though this alternative course would perhaps be adopted only in occasional cases.

Little or nothing can be done for the migratory pupil in the graded Sunday school, any more than in the Sunday school of ordinary type. Effort is to be made, of course, to bring him in line for better things; but the special good in the premises is the spiritual gymnastic for the worker, rather than the hope of really reaching and helping the vagrant.

The  
Migratory  
Pupil.

## CHAPTER XI.

## FORMING AND STARTING.

The  
Real  
Standard.

Education of whatever kind has but one standard—attainment. We cannot properly classify the Sunday school on what the pupil is, who he is, his relation to the church, or any other consideration except *what he knows*. The Bible is our text-book, and the pupil of less than adult years is supposedly placed in a division of the school corresponding to his knowledge of that book, as ascertained by certain tests to which he is subjected. Age should not be considered in this connection further than as an indication of where, under ordinary conditions, a pupil should be found. Within a certain department, for convenience in arranging its classes, divisions of those admitted to that department may be made with some reference to age. That is to say, let departmental lines be drawn strictly on attainment, with some limitations specified later, and let divisions within departments be regulated to some extent by convenience.

A Confu-  
sion of  
Standards.

Other considerations should obtain to only a limited extent in classifying the school. The one cited is simple, easily understood, and will give a more satisfactory and uniform organization throughout than can be secured on any other basis. To introduce other conditions as having more than a relative value is to complicate, to invite confusion, and endanger the success of the undertaking.

The greatest drawback to successful Sunday school classification has been a comparatively close adhering to age as the standard of measurement. This for a long time seemed to be unavoidable, and no other apparently practicable standard was available. This circumstance has complicated the difficulties surrounding the establishing of a correct basis for grading, and cannot be altogether ignored. Some attention is necessarily paid to age in this connection; but it should not in any case have more than a subordinate position in any plan formulated. Some suggestions as to how age limits may be incorporated into a course of study will appear in a later chapter.

As usually divided the modern Sunday school has four departments—the Primary, the Junior, the Intermediate, and the Senior, besides the Normal class. The four divisions named are as good as any, perhaps, and although age limits should hold only a secondary place, the ages in a practicable system of classification would likely be about as follows: Primary, up to about nine years; Junior, nine to fourteen; Intermediate, fourteen to eighteen; Senior, eighteen and above. That is to say, graduation from one grade to another would naturally be expected at about the age limits named—nine, fourteen and eighteen—although the precocity or slowness of pupils may strain the limits either way.

The number of departments is made small, in order to make it possible for schools of all sizes to be included in general educational plans. Though a school may be so small that a department may mean only a class, this simplicity of division places

The Age  
Standard  
■  
Drawback.

The  
Four  
Depart-  
ments.

**Dividing  
the School  
into  
Grades.**

it side by side with the large school in working to a common end. Further division is a matter of detail, regulated by the size and needs of any particular school in question. In a school barely large enough to cover the organization of the four departments a grade would practically mean a term of years equal to the length of time covered by the department to which the grade belongs. Such schools face the difficulty of being unable to furnish within the departments enough classes to properly represent the varying attainments of pupils who need closer classification. This places the very small school at a decided disadvantage. The only available remedial measures are to make the classes as small as the number of suitable teachers will allow; for each teacher to cover a wider range of work than under ordinary conditions; and for a special campaign of effort to be inaugurated to increase the size of the school. If composed of the best of "stuff" (and that kind of "stuff" is often found in the very small schools), the sponsors for the school will usually be able to compass this obstacle. Where a school is large enough to allow even two classes to a department the situation is greatly improved, and where there can be a class for every year in the course the problem of classification is solved.

In the practical application of a scheme of grading the time in each of these departments should be subdivided into periods of one year each, as a matter of convenience in classifying the work. As already stated, this application is feasible where a school is large enough to furnish a number of classes equal to the number of years in the course.

Nor does this require a very large school, a membership of from eighty to one hundred usually being sufficient for the purpose. Here is a scheme which will be found to work well: Let children up to the age of four years be included in the Cradle Roll, and call this Grade 1. The Beginners' Course naturally follows, covering two years, and including Grade 2 and Grade 3. Both of these divisions naturally belong to the Primary department, which may also include the three years following, bringing the child up to the age of nine years, and completing Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6. Passing into the Junior department, covering five years up to fourteen, Grades 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 are added. If four years are assigned to the Intermediate department, this provides for Grades 12, 13, 14 and 15. On this plan the Normal class becomes Grade 16.

This scheme is suggested because it is simple and workable. Any one of a dozen other schemes may be adopted which will prove as good. It is not a question of *the* plan of work so much as *a* plan of work. Let divisions and subdivisions be made in any feasible way so that they embrace the contemplated work in comprehensive form. Then let the adopted scheme be adhered to in close detail by every teacher and officer in every department of the school.

The Bible class division will always contain many people who have not graduated from the lower divisions, but will be constantly receiving accessions from that source. Adults should be admitted from the outside without regard to attainment. The graded school is intended for the training of the rising generation. The Sunday school must

**Listing  
the  
Several  
Grades.**

**A  
Workable  
Scheme.**

**Admitting  
to the  
Bible  
Classes.**

care for the adults of the neighborhood in other ways, discussed in other pages of this book. A Sunday school conducted on the graded system must also have a Normal class, which is discussed in another chapter.

As stated in the preceding chapter, grading must begin among the Primary pupils. The basis of the whole system rests in their department. Perfect alignment can be formed right here, and this can be tentatively carried out in all the higher grades of the school in after years, so far as it shall then be composed of those who thus met with the principle of grading on the threshold of their Sunday school career. There need be no hesitation in laying out positive work for the Primary period, proper care being taken to insure simplicity, variety and attractiveness.

**The  
Place  
of  
Beginning.**

**Getting  
the  
Depart-  
ments  
into  
Line.**

In forming the other divisions of the school requirements for admission to the several grades should be so arranged in the beginning as to disturb as slightly as possible the positions held by pupils at the time grading is introduced. To this end the initial requirements should be such as will not cause pupils to be retrograded. That is to say, the more stringent grading regulations to be enforced after the work is well under way should be waived at the start. A pupil should not be shifted at this point as to his position, if such shifting can be avoided. In the beginning it seems to the pupil that the school management is establishing the conditions which regulate his initial standing; while he can readily see that his future position will be a matter of his own creation, in which he can see the reasonableness of his being governed by

the results of his own work. Such changes as closer classification calls for should consist in promotions of the better equipped pupils, rather than in the retrograding of their less studious fellows. This will be comparatively easy in large schools, where comparisons of pupils are not sharply drawn by circumstances, but will require much tact where a paucity of pupils magnifies the difficulty of forming new classes.

Graded work affords a rare opportunity of placing special incentive before the pupil. Courses of study and methods of work may be so arranged that there is always something in evidence which beckons the pupil to come up higher. The work of each grade may be so enriched that all will feel that there is something better ahead. This idea may be especially promoted in lines of elective work, as well as in the regular curriculum, and is a matter of the greatest importance. The ability to afford legitimate variety in lines germane to the studies in hand is largely a matter of conditions and environment, and this is another argument for giving to the work in hand a special local adaptation.

An Oppor-  
tunity  
for  
Incentive.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE WORK OF THE DIVISIONS.

What shall be the metes and bounds by which the departments of the graded Sunday school are to be limited? Herewith is submitted only a brief generalization, leaving matters of further detail to be arranged by each school, in connection with the course of study to be adopted.

**General  
Primary  
Depart-  
ment  
Sugges-  
tions.**

1. The Primary department should by all means be in a room by itself, or at least in a space screened off from the remainder of the school, the latter plan of separation being practicable almost anywhere. This department naturally begins with the Cradle Roll pupils, which should include the little folks unable to read. When able to read the Primary pupils should be classified for a slightly different line of work, in which, while not making it so prominent as to be burdensome, practice in reading should receive special attention. If the building is so arranged that the whole Primary department can be thrown together at will, and without interfering with the main school, the work of the teachers will be greatly facilitated. This will especially aid in the singing, which should be a prominent exercise, and which, along with permitting the little ones in some way to slightly change positions from time to time, will prove very restful.

Object lessons in great variety should be presented to the classes throughout this department, and much should be made of everything which may ap-

Plans  
of Work  
Suitable  
for the  
Primary.

peal to the eye. While here the children may be familiarized with the Bible stories and biographies which must at some time be woven into the life of every one who is to become a lover of the Word. Give wide range to the imagination, and remember that the mind of the child may be filled with high ideals whose influence will elevate to the end of the longest life. Easy memorizing is also in place, such as golden texts, brief and simple scripture quotations and such exercises as may be provided in the course of study. General memorizing should not be urged so strongly at this step, though, as a little later, remembering that the mind of the child of very tender years is a better storehouse for people, places and incidents than for principles and doctrines. When graduated from this department evidence of substantial work done will be as abundant as at any other point in the upward progress of the pupil.

2. The Junior department opens a much wider field. At a corresponding point in the day school the pupil has taken on such new studies as mark an important era in his life. In the Sunday school there should be sufficient change to show the pupil at once that not only is that which is already learned clearly recognized, but that new and more important things are required of him. The pupil may now be expected to sit attentive and orderly throughout a well-conducted lesson of thirty or thirty-five minutes, and is susceptible, in connection with conduct, to suggestions appealing to embryo manhood and womanhood. The "child" has given place to the "boy" and the "girl," which the individuals chiefly concerned like to have remembered when they are spoken of or addressed. At this stage an extremely

"Child"  
Obsolete  
—Enter  
"Boy" and  
"Girl."

juvenile style of teaching or an ultra petting manner of treatment is resented. We now have little men and women to deal with, and must keep that fact ever in mind.

**The  
Great  
Period  
for  
Learning.**

The Junior period covers a part of the young life in which more is learned than in any other time, and should be marked by a change in the manner and the range of teaching keeping pace with the new conditions. Object lessons are still in place, but they have ceased to be extremely puerile, and are such as appeal more strongly to the adult. The pupil has reached a point where opinion has begun to assert itself, where he can to quite an extent give reasons for things, and where he can cite and comment on the strong and weak points of the characters appearing in the lessons. His capacity for easily memorizing at this age is marvellous, and while this should not be overtaxed his mind can be stored with the treasures of scripture as at no other period of his life. Illustration strikes him quickly and forcibly, and his imagination, which is truer though no less vivid than in his Primary days, completes and appropriates the picture partially drawn.

**Junior  
Days  
Are  
Anchoring  
Days.**

The graded system of Sunday school instruction appeals to the Junior pupil as it appeals to no one else. It is to him a profound stimulus, a developer of unlimited reach. It is exactly in line with his outside duties, and may with tact be incorporated into his ambitions. Under its influence he is anticipative in his recitations to a degree never manifested by him in Bible study under other conditions. In short, its influence on young people at this stage in their Sunday school lives furnishes the only needed apology for its existence. Carefully and tactfully

interest the Junior pupil in the specific work which this system places before him, fall in with his aspirations to be recognized as something more than a little child, and much will have been done toward anchoring him for a higher life. Indeed Junior days are anchoring days, and the ranks of church membership should be constantly swelling with earnest recruits from among these boys and girls.

3. The Intermediate department marks the completion of the regular school course up to the work of the adults. When made up of graduates from the the ranks of the Juniors its members may be said to possess at the beginning a much more general knowledge of Bible facts and circumstances than the average member of the Bible classes under the old conditions. Intermediate work is intended to enlarge on this knowledge of facts, to form as thorough an acquaintance as may be with surroundings and conditions, to study the relations of cause and effect in life and duty, and to glean more fully from biography and incident the personal lessons they are intended to convey; while the horizon of study is widened, comparisons and analyses of individuals and motives are instituted, truths are grouped and general deductions made, and habits of reflection formed and strengthened. The Sunday school is not a place for the inculcation of hair-splitting dogma, but the simple doctrines of Christianity may be explained and dwelt upon. A kind of review of that which has been learned in the Junior department should be incorporated, but in such a way as to bring out more forcibly the features just enumerated.

4. This last department is an approach to mature manhood and womanhood in the investigation

The  
Broader  
Interme-  
diate  
Work.

**The  
Seniors.**

of truth, and graduation from this should furnish the school with a stalwart corps of Bible students invaluable in the sustaining of its higher lines of work. A diploma from this department should admit to the Normal class, and every such graduate should become a fixture in the ranks of this class or of the Bible classes, if not called in some way to serve the school.

**No  
Gradua-  
tion  
"From."**

Right here let it be said that there should be no such thing as graduation *from* the Sunday school. All graduation should be from one part of it into another; and when its limited specified course of study shall have been completed the Normal class or the Bible class is the natural place for post-graduate work. The days of the years of our Bible student pilgrimage are the days of the years of our natural lives. Any other limitation is unwarranted. The field of usefulness in these adult classes is unlimited. It is not only that which we learn and that in which we spiritually grow that compensates for our continued pupilage, but that which by personal class contact we may impart to others, and that which by personal example we may induce them to undertake.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## FROM GRADE TO GRADE.

The successful Sunday school must be symmetrical. It is only in its best form when there are no marked incongruities in the make-up of its classes, viewed from any practical standpoint. It is sometimes necessary for the youth in his later "teens" to sit in class beside the patriarch of three-score-and-ten—but it is not nature's way. People of all ages in the school will do their best work when associated with those of approximately their own age. It is much better to have illy assorted classes than not to make the Sunday school comprehensive in its reach, and yet where natural and easy conditions can be established the facilities for good work are multiplied.

One of the perplexities connected with the grading of the Sunday school is met with just here. Pupils vary so widely in faithfulness, industry and attainment that it seems almost impossible to assemble them in groups which will not contravene all ideas of propriety in the premises. Here, for example, is a girl of twelve who grades away above representative girls of sixteen—a kind of precocity which crops out here and there all over the school, to the embarrassment of teachers and superintendent. What is to be done about it?

The remedy lies in having regular and special courses, supplemented in special cases by elective work. Let the regular course for any grade always

The  
Need  
of  
Symmetry.

Many  
Pupils  
of  
Many  
Kinds.

**Regular  
and  
Special  
Courses.**

be so plain and easy that the dullest pupil may be able to compass it. Have special courses covering the same period, of which bright pupils can avail themselves, and be prepared to meet all needs from the Primary room to the Normal class. Let the pupils in passing from grade to grade receive certificates or diplomas suited to the courses which have been taken, just as the same thing is done in other educational institutions. In this way the pupil's term of twelve or fifteen years in the graded part of the Sunday school will not be shortened, but his diploma when he enters the Normal class will record an altogether different achievement from that of his less studious fellow. In this way different measures of work may be adjusted to a common plan.

There may very properly be a measure of flexibility as to the age limits at which pupils may pass from grade to grade; yet this flexibility should have such fixed limits as will preserve the class symmetry of the school. Such variation should be allowed as will furnish to the pupil a stimulus for better study, without leaving discouragement for others in his wake.

**Minimum  
Ages in  
Promotion.**

Taking the natural age limits of the different departments as before discussed, I would establish a minimum age before reaching which a pupil could not pass into a higher grade. If, for instance, the usual time for entering the Junior department is at the age of nine years, I would place the minimum at eight. If the time of graduation from the Junior is fourteen, the minimum for entering the Intermediate classes should be thirteen. If the approximate time for completing the Intermediate course is at eighteen, seventeen should be the minimum for going into the Senior class. Let those who sooner

complete the various steps be given extra elective work, as suggested, which even then will allow them to gain in time on the regular work. This will at the same time prevent the personal make-up of the school becoming distorted from the standpoint of age.

Those who have had anything to do with special class work in the Sunday school will testify that it has been their best and most satisfactory work. The graded Sunday school affords opportunities for these more attractive studies that have never been known, and through these opportunities the teacher's great opportunity must come. The pupil needs above all things to realize that the Sunday school is the open door to rich treasures of knowledge, and to be cured of the prevalent impression that it is capable of nothing bright, original and fascinating. Elective work, recognized by special diplomas, can be made to infinitely widen the Sunday school horizon. Special talent should be employed in every school in arranging for such work.

The  
Teacher's  
Great  
Opportu-  
nity.

A Day  
in the  
Calendar.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MANNER OF PROMOTION

Systematic promotion is an essential feature of any kind of educational work, and must of course be incorporated in the plans of a graded system in the Sunday school. As the grades are most easily arranged on a yearly basis, promotion periods should be made annual as well. A time in the year should be decided on, chosen with reference to the environment of the school, and the season when it is fullest in the matter of attendance. This date should be as firmly fixed as is Christmas or Children's Day, and should be as prominently recognized in the school calendar.

Promotion  
Day a  
Special  
Occasion.

Promotion Day, or Commencement Day, or whatever it may be called in a given school, should be made a special occasion. Its program should be special, without interfering with the regular lesson, and as attractive as may be. The brief program, like all Sunday school programs, should not be literary, and should contain nothing in the way of addresses except a few fitting words connected with the awarding of certificates and diplomas, recognizing the work done, commending the participants, and emphasizing the importance of the occasion. The pastor and church officers should have just enough to do with the occasion to give it an official character. Flowers are nowhere more appropriate and significant than on Sunday school occasions, and if in season these may abound. The music should be

plentiful and well chosen. Above all, the fullest attendance of the constituency of the church, and of the community in general, should be secured.

The promotion of the individual pupil should be contingent upon the satisfying of established conditions. Promotion presupposes positive ground upon which it may rest, and derives its value from having such a basis in fact. It is apparent that it must rest upon a degree of knowledge of things which may be known and are determinate, and not upon things indefinite and inferential. The examinations—both quarterly and annual—which precede the occasion should therefore be simple, direct and easily understood, and based upon questions naturally growing out of the lessons learned. In short, they should correspond in character somewhat with those of the day school, except that they should in most cases be less rigid.

A scale of points will perhaps be necessary for the proper regulation of examinations, a fixed minimum of which will be regarded as sufficient to allow the pupil to pass. Seventy points out of a possible 100 is a reasonable basis. It is a good idea just here to introduce attendance and faithfulness as elements in the case. For instance, if a pupil should make an absolutely perfect record in the year, missing no Sundays and never being late, and showing certificates of attendance elsewhere when away from home, let an additional credit of say twelve points be given. If fifty good Sundays are recorded let the credit be ten points. If no more than three-fourths of the Sundays find the pupil in place, let a discount of five points be made, and if the number be reduced to one-half let ten points be taken off. A pupil being

Promotion  
Always  
for  
Cause.

Using  
a Scale  
of  
Points.

present only twenty-six full Sundays and making an examination record of eighty points (an improbability for one so often absent) would still have seventy points left with which to make his grade. These details can be arranged to conform to local conditions and the judgment of the management.

The evidences of promotion, awarded on these occasions, should consist of certificates in passing from grade to grade, and of diplomas when promotion carries the pupil into a higher department, with a special diploma at the completion of the course and entrance into the Normal class. These documents should be neat in form and style, should be attested by the superintendent and the teacher of the promoted pupils, and should bear the seal of the school. The doing of everything in decency and in order, the dignifying of duties too often considered trivial, the imparting of character to things seemingly devoid of character—these are strong points in graded work.

**Kinds of  
Certificates  
and  
Diplomas.**

These certificates and diplomas must vary with the kind of course the pupil is taking, and the quantity of elective work done. The blank forms may be so prepared as to express these differences, which may also be emphasized by different colors in the seals attached. This idea is not a new one, and is already incorporated in the practice of some of our state Sunday school associations in their teacher training work.

The awarding of special class honors, or the public recognition of pupils after a discriminating fashion, is to be deprecated. The differences in achievement are shown by the certificates received, and the simple announcement of these, without personal comment, should suffice. I am aware that some people

object to the diploma system, because of possible rivalries and heart-burnings; but investigation will show that any trouble experienced has grown out of injudicious competitive stimulation, and the pitting of one pupil against another for something which *only one can get*. The system here recommended possesses none of these features, and the wholesome stimulus afforded to *each* pupil is at the expense of no other pupil in the entire school. The avoidance of the senseless public invidious distinctions so often made between pupils, and the avoidance of the pernicious habit of making the success of one the defeat of another, will remove every obstacle of this character out of the way of Promotion Day and its wholesome effect on the school and on the community.

In connection with all of this work a comprehensive and substantial register should be kept. I do not know of any book especially designed for the purpose, but it should be sufficiently large to cover the work of a term of years. The progress of every pupil should be recorded, and a blank book can be ruled for the purpose with a pen and suitably colored inks. This book should be kept in a secure place on the Sunday school premises, and should always be accessible for inspection. In most cases it had better be kept by some one chosen for the purpose, and not by the secretary of the school. In nearly every school there is some one who will take special pride and interest in such work. In a small school a teacher or a pupil may do it. In a large school a special officer may be required. In any case such a register will acquire a priceless value in a few years.

Guarding  
Against a  
Bad  
Practice.

A Graded  
Course  
Register.

THE MARY E. BIVINS LIBRARY  
of  
THE SOUTHWEST CHRISTIAN SEMINARY

**Multiplied  
Courses of  
Study.**

Thus far in the history of the movement for grading the Sunday school the discussions of the subject have consisted largely in the presentation and analyses of courses of study. This is the natural manifestation of the interest felt in the all-absorbing question, 'What shall we study?' As a result suggestive curricula are multiplying, with a possibility of producing confusion in the minds of those seeking the best. Some of those presented are quite simple and practicable, while an occasional curriculum is so heavy and complicated as to be forbidding. A number of authors have given the public the benefit of their studies in this line. A few of the religious denominations have issued courses of study, while others seem to have the matter under advisement.

There is much hesitation among Sunday school workers of experience, in adopting or recommending, without amendment, any of the courses of study so far submitted. On every hand are evidences of a disposition to continue to feel the way. The time for concerted action upon lines giving promise of securing general satisfaction has evidently not yet arrived.

Two or three times in these pages have appeared words of caution against attempting too much. The same point need not be enlarged upon in this connection. A full enough course is needed to give the pupil a reasonable measure of employment, without either overtaxing him or trifling with his time. The

## CHAPTER XV.

### COURSES OF STUDY.

Do not  
Attempt  
too Much

design is to help him to *know*. With this object before us it is understood that a little well learned is worth much more than a great mass of knowledge unassimilated. A great advantage of this simplicity, too, is that it is an adaptation to the measure of the dull pupil. It places this unfortunate individual, who is overlooked in so many educational plans, squarely on his feet. At the same time, on this platform the brightest young people can stand, with special courses and elective work ready for any measure of undertaking.

Courses of study must be prepared with reference to the peculiarities of the various ages and grades of pupils. The ever-present question is, What may best be learned at *this* point? Some things to be learned from the Bible cannot be taught to children at all. Other lessons are the children's own. Some things are to be pressed strongly in one grade, and barely touched upon in another. Some other things are equally attractive, equally important, and equally adaptable to all ages, the difference lying in the standpoints from which these things are taught, and the phases of the subjects presented. Less difference in matter of instruction is sometimes required than in the manner in which instruction is imparted. Different things are deduced from the same lesson for the benefit of different grades.

The order and manner in which Bible history, geography, biography, literature and doctrine should be taught must be carefully considered; and when a conclusion has been reached one cannot be certain that some variation from the plan might not have been better. There is so much that is relative, so much that is indeterminate as to the wisdom of do-

Adaptation  
to Ages  
and  
Grades.

No Place  
for  
Dogma-  
tism.

ing things in certain ways, that one cannot afford to be dogmatic in the premises. When it has been decided that one thing is better than some other thing with which one is familiar in matters of this kind, it is with the realization that there may be something else that is still better. One meaning of this is that what is best for one to work out with the facilities at hand would possibly be the better of amendment by another who undertakes the same thing under other conditions; which is another way of reiterating the lesson of local adaptation.

Supple-  
mentary  
Work  
Necessary.

Even a cursory effort at the preparing of a course of study at once brings out the necessity of supplementary work. If such systems as the International are adhered to as proposed, regular lesson study must of course be incorporated; but this alone is insufficient for the purpose. This insufficiency is both because of the difficulty found in adapting certain lessons to the general plan, and the necessity of having lines of study in which systematized information may be taught in a progressive and climacteric way. Supplementary work is the natural and altogether sufficient resource, as shown in the many ways in which its possibilities are brought out in the proposed courses of study. In fact it is the real basis of graded instruction, its flexibility and adaptability covering requirements of every kind.

Ordinary Sunday school teaching in our day has resulted in the evolution of periodical "helps" for such phases of study as are contemplated by the courses of lessons in use. The development of this literature is one of the marvels of the day. Unknown a half century ago, it has reached a point where every religious denomination of consequence

has a more or less complete line of periodicals wholly its own, used in its own Sunday schools, watching carefully over the interpretations of scripture placed before its young people, and doctrinally safeguarding its creed. All of this is supplemented by a few similar lines wholly undenominational in character. The courses of study presented in these pages do not contemplate any interference whatever with this established condition. Nothing so good can be done for regular lesson work as to make use of this same literature. No change is proposed except that a better use be made of it under these more stimulating conditions.

For the supplemental work provided for these same "helps" will be useful. As the pupils move from grade to grade other literature will be needed. But little of this additional literature is of a periodical character, and much of it is issued by the denominational publishing houses themselves. The prosecution of graded work to its legitimate ends will induce a much wider introduction of religious books than is ordinarily found in connection with Sunday school study, the present limited use of which class of books is to be deplored.

The whole tendency of the multiplying courses of Sunday school study now being issued is to broaden the horizon of investigation. It is a most wholesome condition.

Using Es-  
tablished  
Periodical  
Literature.

Using  
Religious  
Books.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE NORMAL CLASS.

As already specified elsewhere, membership in this class is the highest position in the graded Sunday school attainable by the pupil as a pupil. It is by all odds the most desirable place within the scope of the entire organization. The only drawback to Normal class membership is that such membership is always in danger of being short-lived, or at least of being seriously interrupted, since the kind of people of whom it is composed are likely to be called at any time to special responsibility elsewhere in the school. Many an officer or teacher who reads this paragraph covets the enjoyment of such work and relative rest as a Normal class affords—and who can blame him? The physician who wants to keep abreast of the times likes to suspend his practice and attend medical lectures from time to time. Similarly, many an official in the Sunday school would thus be the better of "attending the lectures" in the home school once in a while, both as a rejuvenator and as a developer. What a pity such an experience is not more often feasible! If it ever becomes so it will be through the development of graded work.

The natural membership of the Normal class is made up of graduates from the next department. Special pains should be taken to prevent these graduates from slipping away from the school, of which there is always more or less danger. Let them be anchored in the higher class if possible. Of this class the accumulating graduates essentially form the nu-

cleus. Here the new ones meet such of those completing the course in other years as are not drafted for special school service; and they thus together form an association which at this "commencement" time is especially needed. If the graduates can be held *now* through a reasonable period the work of years will be "clinched" and strengthened, and their Sunday school *character* established, while every such holding widens the horizon of the school's usefulness. If these people are lost *now*, the good accomplished is dwarfed, and the school loses an increment to its probable working assets to which it is clearly entitled. Do not allow them to get away *now*.

Holding  
School  
Graduates.

The Normal class is not to be made a holy of holies, and yet there must be conditions of membership. Its doors must not be shut arbitrarily against those who have not taken the school course of study. Bible students of adult years should always find a welcome, and some of the best members of the organization may thus be secured. However, in schools sufficiently large to sustain general Bible classes beside, it is better to steer the representative careless adult into one of these, unless a specific preference for the Normal class is expressed. Things are expected of this class which will often discourage one wholly unaccustomed to study, while it is easy to suggest removal from Bible class to Normal class to one who is likely to profit by the change.

If there is a "best" teacher in the school that teacher is needed by the Normal class. The choice of this teacher is a matter of the gravest importance. The ability to intelligently instruct is only one of many essential qualifications. He should not only command respect for what he is and what he knows, but

**The  
Normal  
Class  
Teacher.**

should be selected because of staying qualities in looking after the details of the work, as well as in providing adequate instruction. The pastor or the superintendent is often called upon to take charge of this class. In either case it is unfortunate, although it sometimes seems to be unavoidable. Either has enough to do without the addition of this wearing responsibility. One of the two is expected to conduct the Teachers' Meeting, and one cannot well handle both organizations without combining them—which is another unfortunate necessity. The Normal class and the Teachers' Meeting parallel each other in some things; but the one is incidentally the trainer of teachers *for* work, while the other deals directly with teachers *at* work—things not incongruous, and yet not always workable together to good advantage. I have no hesitation, though, in urging that where they cannot be separately maintained and satisfactorily taught by good teachers they should be merged.

**The  
Hour  
of  
Meeting.**

It is better that the Normal class meet at the same hour as the school, for the reason that the multiplication of classes and meetings at other hours is a multiplication of the difficulties of Sunday school work. As a general principle I would have no regular outside hour for any Sunday school organization unless such arrangement is unavoidable. The Teachers' Meeting comes in the category of the unavoidable. The outside hour is the greatest of all the difficulties connected with the maintenance of this meeting. If the Normal class be combined with it, the result is the decimation of class attendance, and the consequent defeat of some of the chief purposes of the organization.

If a consensus of opinion were asked for as to the greatest of all obstacles to Sunday school progress the universal reply would be that it lies in the difficulty of securing teachers. There have never been enough of available teachers, even discarding reasonable discrimination as to fitness. There has always been a woful lack of qualification. These things have been and are true of Sunday school work in its crudest forms. They are doubly true when careful grading and systematic courses of study are contemplated. There is a ringing call for many, many more teachers, and immeasurably better teachers. Even were special grading unthought of, the demand for teacher training is imperative.

I have already spoken of teacher training as an incidental work of the Normal class. While in a sense this training is incidental, in a larger sense it is fundamental. We must have teachers, and in order to have them we must make them, and this class is to be our factory. Training in comprehensive investigation, in analytical study, in the wholesome and attractive presentation of fact, in the selection of the thing to be taught, in resourcefulness in the use of incident and illustration, in the rounding up of truth, in the adaptation of teaching to the taught—all of this and much more belongs to the Normal class. A model class in the hands of a model leader should be a model-maker. Going from this class into the Teachers' Meeting, with its text-book study of principle and method, its weekly wrestle with problems of local development, its hand-to-hand contact with Sunday school life in all of its phases, the Normal class student is the most promising of all novitiates in the ranks of teachers.

Wanted—  
More  
and  
Better  
Teachers.

This  
Class  
in  
Teacher  
Training.

**Elective  
Work.**

The work of this class may be to quite an extent elective. That is to say, teacher and pupils may together select special side studies germane to the purposes of the organization. The field is practically boundless, and affords such helpful variety as makes it comparatively easy to maintain interest. Several writers have contributed substantially to the possible curriculum of the Normal class. Without discussing their work in detail, I take pleasure in recommending its careful investigation.

**The  
Reserve  
Corps.**

In large Sunday schools it is possible to carry this work into further detail by establishing what is sometimes called a Reserve Corps. This is simply the setting aside of a number of trained people to be always ready for the call to serve as substitute teachers. The lesson is usually taught to the Reserve Corps a week in advance. The idea is admirable, in cases where it is feasible.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## EQUIPMENT FOR GRADING.

It is a law of production that the most incomplete and unsatisfactory of all work is that which is done without proper tools. The representative Sunday school never needed good equipment so much as now. It is even more in demand in the graded Sunday school. Fortunately for all concerned, equipment of almost any desired kind is now available, and at constantly decreasing relative cost. The Sunday school which really desires such equipment as its size and environment require can within a very reasonable period rise to the occasion.

What is meant by adequate equipment is (1) plenty of Bibles, plenty of song books, plenty of the periodical literature used in connection with the work of the school; (2) maps, charts, blackboards, etc., both for class work and for general use; (3) especially prepared supplementary literature, as needed, (4) a Sunday school library. I would not class this last as an important part of up-to-date equipment unless it is much better made up and used to much better advantage than in even the better class of Sunday schools as we find them. If in the first three specifications the school is well cared for, there is less occasion for insisting upon the fourth.

Good equipment is much more important than elegant premises. As desirable as it is to have neat and well appointed rooms, handsome furniture, an attractive architectural exterior, etc., these things

We Must  
Have  
Good  
Tools.

The  
Meaning  
of  
Equipment.

after all are secondary. Indeed they are often altogether beyond reach, and many of the best schools long for such luxuries in vain. The pupils know that such things are not available, and blame nobody for their absence. It is not so certain, though, that the absence of these other things, more or less of which are known to be obtainable if proper effort is made to secure them, is not mentally charged up against inefficient management.

Good equipment is a visible proof of purpose. The tools to work with point unmistakably to work to be done. Equipment is a most effective invitation to neighborhood coöperation. Let it be understood that the school will secure everything needed as rapidly as possible, even if accomplished slowly, and much has been done to give it local character. Such equipment as is possible is an expression of good faith. It is being honest with the pupil. While the pupil is asked to come in for instruction, here is preparation to adequately furnish that instruction. Pupils are asked to do good work, because *the school has done its part* in promoting such work. It is simply a fair and reasonable proposition. How seldom does Sunday school management thus fully do its part!

As already stated, equipment in our day is not a matter of enormous expense. In most cases the necessary outlay is a mere bagatelle as compared with the ability of the constituency which is to furnish it. That school is rarely situated in which this need cannot in some easy way be supplied. The necessary outlay for maps, blackboards, etc., is often much overrated. Because an undertaking looks a little difficult on the surface, responsibility is dodged, and the school suffers accordingly. It is overlooked that

Equipment  
Easily  
Possible.

there is no occasion for buying everything at once; that equipment will be better appreciated and will be used to better advantage if added item at a time, while this plan of purchase will solve the problem of outlay. Equipping the Sunday school cannot be classed among the very difficult problems involved in its management.

The matter of adaptation, to which I have several times referred, applies especially to equipment. The small school, in a single room, where no object can be at a great distance from the pupil's eye, has no space and no use for a multiplication of globes, maps and blackboards. A few simple pieces, chosen to suit the size of the room, the wall space available, and the kind of work to be done, are all-sufficient. In this kind of school such helps to lesson work must be used in a general way, and the simpler and the plainer they are the better. On the other hand, in very large schools, any department of which is practically a school in itself, where rooms are built with the exact uses to which they are to be devoted in view, it is not only necessary that there be more or less of duplication of equipment, but it may be especially adapted to the various departments in a way not feasible under other conditions. These contingent matters can be decided only on the ground, and on the judgment of those who have the facts before them.

Of what should equipment consist? I cannot enter into detail on this subject. There should be no occasion to emphasize the necessity of *plenty* of Bibles and song books. Everything else is contingent. I must, however, emphasize, without discussion, the value of good maps, and their very liberal use in les-

Adapta-  
tion of  
Equipment.

**The Use  
of the  
Black-  
board.**

son work. The blackboard, once mastered, is perhaps ratable as first of all conveniences in importance. Every teacher and every superintendent has special use for the blackboard. There is a mistaken notion that one should be an artist, and able to handle colored chalk in bewildering combinations, in order to use the blackboard to advantage. Without disparaging skill in this line, for it is not to be despised, the greatest value of the blackboard lies in the outline lesson plan, the striking illustration, the presentation of contrasts, comparisons and groups of ideas, the massing of facts, analyses of things difficult to understand, and so on to the end of the long list of things which will suggest themselves;—*all figured out in the presence of the class or school.* The crudest exercise, in which attentive eyes are following the chalk in the fingers of the teacher, is worth many times the most artistic blackboard production placed before the class in complete form. The superintendent has no resource, I care not what he may have at command, equal to the blackboard for catching and holding attention. The teacher, above all others, needs the blackboard, the use of which should be taught in the Teachers' Meeting. Its further discussion here, though, is not germane to the subject in hand.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## USING THE TEACHERS' MEETING.

Perhaps no adjunct of the Sunday school has so vindicated its usefulness, or grown so rapidly and so substantially in importance in our time, as has the Teachers' Meeting. Its position in Sunday school economy can hardly be unduly magnified. It is to the Sunday school what the prayer meeting is to the church. A well attended, deeply spiritual prayer meeting essentially means a good church. The right kind of a Teachers' Meeting just as certainly means a good Sunday school.

The Teachers' Meeting is the Sunday school home circle. It is the unifier. It is the developer. It is the remover of obstacles, the lifter of burdens. It is the never-failing source of inspiration. It is, more than any other feature of the Sunday school, the guarantor of success. The wonder of those who really know its value is how so many intelligent workers manage to get along without it.

I want to be set down as a stickler for the fullest use of the Teachers' Meeting. In my own work I have no hesitation in making loyal membership in this meeting, and attendance at its sessions, positive conditions of accepting the services of any teacher, even in the ordinary Sunday school. I have in some instances declined to appoint otherwise good teachers who proposed to ignore this highest and most important of all the classes. A teacher who begins by attending Teachers' Meeting, and then drops out, is

Two  
Helpful  
Meetings.

The  
Many-sided  
Resource.

A Meeting  
for All  
Teachers.

**Attend,  
or Step  
Out.**

left off the list at the end of the year. Experience teaches me that the superintendent should go farther: The teacher who, having ceased to attend this meeting, on being remonstrated with expresses indifference about it, or the intention of taking no further part in it, should be relieved *at once*. Hereafter, in any school of which I may have charge, having clearly announced the purpose in advance, I will promptly remove any teacher who from indifference, from absorption in other things, or from personal pique, is recalcitrant on this point.

**How  
this  
Meeting  
Vindicates  
Itself.**

The magnifying of the Teachers' Meeting, and the erection and maintenance of a high standard in its exercises and in its positive requirements, have been of more value and assistance to me in Sunday school management than any and all the other things I have undertaken. I have had teachers go into the Teachers' Meeting listlessly and in hesitation;—but if they have proven to be teachers of any value at all, they in all cases have come out of a term of such meetings much more efficient, and altogether ready for duty. The skeptical as to the utility of the organization are invariably converted, and the "kicker" becomes the earnest supporter of school authority and plans.

Did space permit, and were it germane to the subject in hand, I would be glad to speak of my own rich experiences in the past year in the Teachers' Meeting. Suffice it to say that these experiences have been personally helpful beyond measure. The visible development of absolute oneness among people unaccustomed to anything beyond a perfunctory semblance of unity; the conversion of timid spectators into cheerful participants; the universal mag-

nifying of the teacher's office and responsibility; and, above all, the creation and strengthening of ties of love and sympathy;—all of these must be personally realized in order to be appreciated. However, I must add in this connection, that when it is conceived that the most important business of the meeting is to discuss the Sunday school lesson, as important as that is, the highest possibilities of the organization are altogether misunderstood.

Special  
Good  
Secured.

The Teachers' Meeting is of course a paramount consideration if the Sunday school is to be carefully graded. Every reason for its installation in the ordinary school is greatly emphasized in the higher work. It is unnecessary to either cite or discuss these reasons. It will suffice to furnish an answer in part to the question, How may the Teachers' Meeting be used to promote grading?

First of all, when a general council of all the adults in any way responsible for the school shall have decided to inaugurate the system of grading, let the work be turned over entirely to the Teachers' Meeting. Leave all details until this point is reached; then let these be taken up and disposed of thoroughly and completely. Let this meeting be the workshop in which is worked out the *how* to do everything called for in every department of the school. Undertake nothing of a radical character until it shall first have been so discussed and explained as to be thoroughly understood by every one in any way involved in its execution.

The  
Sunday  
School  
Method  
Workshop.

Bring all questions to this tribunal which are not wholly within the prerogative of the management. No plans can be formed which can completely fore-stall the unforeseen contingencies which will arise.

**A Con-  
venient  
Tribunal.**

When these contingencies do arise they cannot be ignored, and usually their disposal cannot long be postponed. This weekly council furnishes the best of all ways out of such difficulties. Matters of cheer and developments of a discouraging character are alike suitable themes for the Teachers' Meeting, and their discussion should be a part of its program.

**Combined  
Experience  
and  
Judgment.**

Grading will be prolific of problems calling for the exercise of tact and wisdom. The combined experience and judgment of all concerned will be required at many a turn—and even then judgment may sometimes be at fault. Plans of work and special exercises will be the better of being tested. Trial examinations will need to be conducted. Many little things almost impossible of settlement on the spur of the moment in the class hour will develop. What adequate disposal and adjustment of all of these is available in the absence of the Teachers' Meeting?

**The  
Class  
of All  
Classes.**

The weekly gathering of teachers is a place for specific instruction. The teachers themselves form a class the teaching of which is more important than the teaching of any of the classes over which the several teachers preside. Grading presupposes a kind of work calling for the best of teaching, and emphasizing the desirability of keeping abreast of the times in manner and method. The Teachers' Meeting requires a leader capable of thus instructing the instructors and leading the leaders. Such an individual can usually be found, and when found will soon come to be rated as indispensable.

Finally, let the Teachers' Meeting be the place for effectually settling all differences. Those who make the best teachers are rarely troubled with disagree-

ments of any kind. Indeed a corps of teachers may be so chosen as to avoid special danger from this source. The would-be teacher known to possess a proneness for discord should be passed by in the organization of the school. Yet when all precautions have been taken, honest differences of opinion may sometimes arise, resulting in divided counsels. These differences must be adjusted right here. In a long experience I have never seen a case which could not be so adjusted, and am sure that persistent incorrigibility should be followed by the retirement of the recalcitrant. When the majority of the teachers have decided on a policy or measure its adoption should be made unanimous, and the school should in no case be made aware of a disagreement. An irreconcilable minority can better be spared than permitted to exploit its opposition. A well-conducted Teachers' Meeting is a safeguard almost absolute against troubles of this character.

The  
Place  
for  
Settling  
Differ-  
ances.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## GRADING MEMORANDA.

**Beware  
of  
"Excep-  
tions."**

Beware of exceptions to any of the provisions laid down in your plan of grading. In the first place, insist that teachers and officers do everything just as planned and agreed upon in general council. Having guarded against the plan being too rigorous and exacting, see that *as* adopted it be adhered to in all details. "Exceptions" are dangerous, demoralizing. If one teacher can ignore the Teachers' Meeting—the school's home circle—no one can rightfully be held to its requirements. If one pupil is allowed to leave an easy condition of promotion unsatisfied, the door to all kinds of irregularities is thrown wide open. The only way is to stand by the specifications.

**Correct  
Time  
Adjust-  
ments.**

In graded work not only the regular lesson is to receive attention, but more or less supplementary work is to be introduced. This means a division of the time usually allotted to the lesson. It is better to have this division regular, though not necessarily iron-clad. Too much flexibility invites irregularity, with its train of evils. To illustrate, if the class period is thirty-five minutes, and the lesson be given twenty and the supplementary work fifteen, it is better to keep up these proportions. This is only another way of saying that time adjustments, like everything else, should be a part of the system.

In the school review period the superintendent can sometimes increase interest by blackboard or other brief and striking graphic illustration of something

connected with the immediate work of some special grade, changing this exercise from grade to grade as occasion may offer. This must of course be done judiciously and not too frequently, always guarding against the possibility of overdoing. By the way, graphic work is the richest of all aids to which one can have recourse in class instruction of whatever kind, and every teacher should make this a matter of study.

The Sunday school library is in danger of falling into disuse, and in many places cuts but little figure in the attractions of the school or in its work. A result of grading will be to sharpen the demand for helpful books, which those desiring them often cannot afford to purchase. Placing these books in the library, and calling attention to them, will increase the usefulness of that institution.

General supplies of some kinds not usually found in the Sunday school are required by most of the courses of study recommended for use. It is better that these supplies be bought from the school treasury, rather than that the pupils be asked to secure them. The expense is not great when taken care of in this way, but even a light expense is sufficient to deter the poorer children from entering the school, if such expense is to be individually borne. Some books may be needed occasionally which the pupil should own, and which will be valued more highly if paid for individually. The school will do well to buy such books in bulk, and make a liberal division of the cost with the pupil.

The plan of graded work adopted by any given school should be written out succinctly and clearly, with courses of study, regulations and all details, and

A Hint  
for the  
Superin-  
tendent.

Using  
the  
Library.

The  
Purchase  
of  
Supplies.

printed, copies being distributed among the members, with a liberal supply in reserve. It is still better to print the matter intended for each department of the school separately.

**The  
Lecture  
Idea.**

A school is sometimes so fortunately situated that a good illustrated lecture, or series of lectures, along the lines of work in its higher departments, can be arranged. A Normal class is often in position to avail itself of this valuable kind of help. The resultant good consists not only in the instruction received but in the advertising of the work—a consideration by no means to be ignored.

**The  
General  
Bible  
Class.**

The general Bible class has not been discussed in these pages, that class not being reachable, in most cases, by any system of grading. Such a class, however, is needed in even the smallest school, and in schools of average size place is found for at least two or three such classes. The Bible class affords a Sunday school home for adults who have not taken the full school course, those who are not so situated as to be able to study, and those (a large number) who feel that they cannot enter a class which works to a standard of membership. It also provides for the floating attendance of adults, of whom there are more or less in every community. Such classes have a very important mission, may do a great deal of good, and should be thoroughly cared for in every Sunday school.

## CHAPTER XX.

## WELL WORTH WHILE.

Now that we have gone over the ground together in discussing a higher type of work in the Sunday school, the question naturally presents itself, Is it all worth while? The Sunday school is already coming into greater prominence, and is perhaps more widely useful than ever before. Then why substitute the strenuous for the passive, trying to do things without which the religious world has flourished so long?

## Is it worth while?

Is *anything* worth while? It has already been shown that the Sunday school is losing out among its own friends because, educationally, it is not "holding its own." Whatever else may be said of it, there is no disputing that everything else educational is leaving it far to the rear. To occupy such a position in our day is prophetic of a decline. The Sunday school cannot stand still.

It is foolish to say that a thing is worth doing at all if it is not worth doing well. That which is worth doing cannot be done too well. A peculiarity of Sunday school work is that it has always been characterized by more carelessness and incompleteness than anything else in which even its best friends are in any way vitally interested. All are conscious of this weakness, and all are conscious that in the end the great encomium, "Well done," cannot crown the work as it is usually found.

Is it  
Worth  
While?

Losing  
Ground.

A Char-  
acteristic  
Weakness.

**Only  
One  
Chance.**

We pass over the educational period in our lives but once. There is no such thing as coming this way a second time. Those who are not trained and saved while under Sunday school influence now will never have the same opportunity, under the same conditions, again. Those who do poor work as educators and leaders can never atone for it by doing better work with the same people in a second opportunity.

**A Bad  
Rule, a  
Good  
Exception.**

The Christian church sustains the character in the eyes of the world of being a do-nothing institution. The measure of its accomplishment is all out of proportion to its measure of opportunity. In its membership the rule is indifference and inefficiency—the exception is faithfulness and efficiency. What it achieves is largely in spite of, and rarely because of, the bulk of its organic constituency. It needs above all things to be made (1) to know, and (2) to do.

**Connect-  
ing  
Links.**

If the character of the church is to be changed, the change will come largely through the Sunday school. Through this it may be made practically a body of trained workers. To nothing else and in no other direction can the church look with a reasonable hope of substantial assistance in its own reform. This reform must come through character building in the Sunday school. Character building must come through better work there. Better work there must come through the erection of higher standards. The higher standards mean education on lines of careful grading and systematic instruction. Is it all worth while?



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